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LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE
&
GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME 15

DARK HORSE COMICS

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連れ狼

VOLUME 15

BROTHERS OF THE GRASS

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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BROTHERS OF THE GRASS

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME
15

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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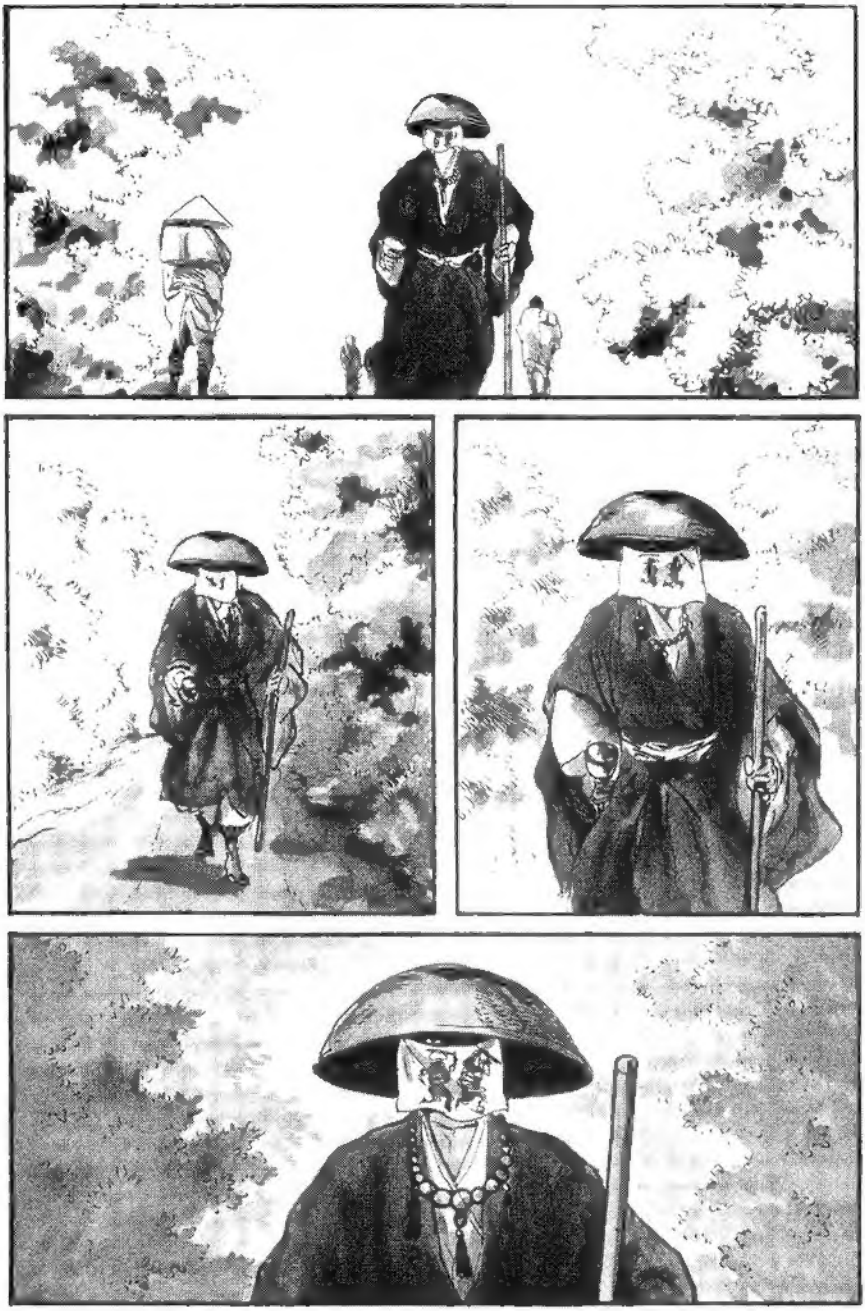
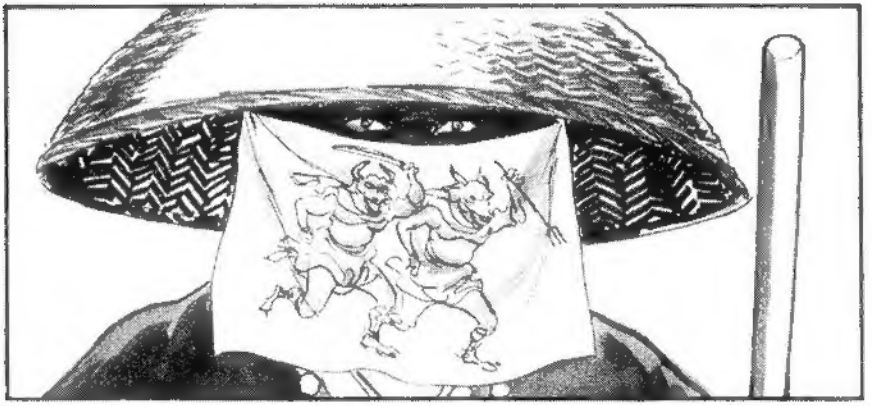
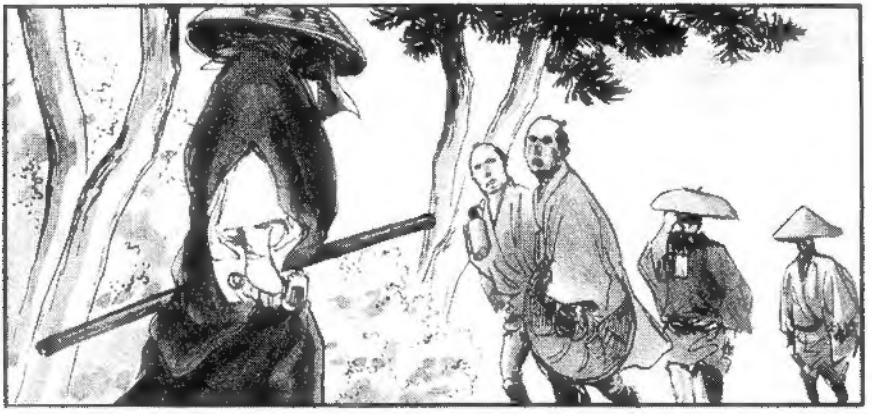
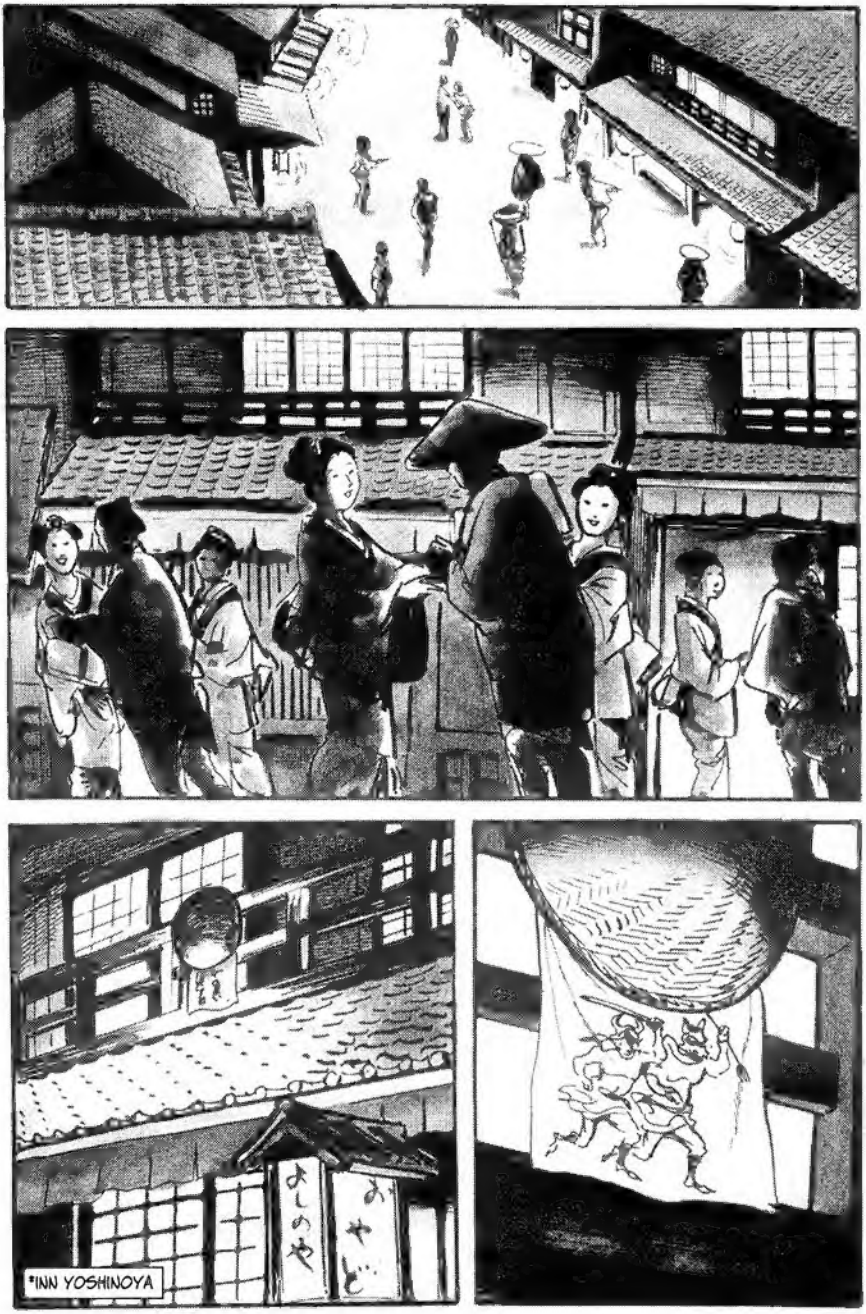
the seventy-third

The Castle of Women

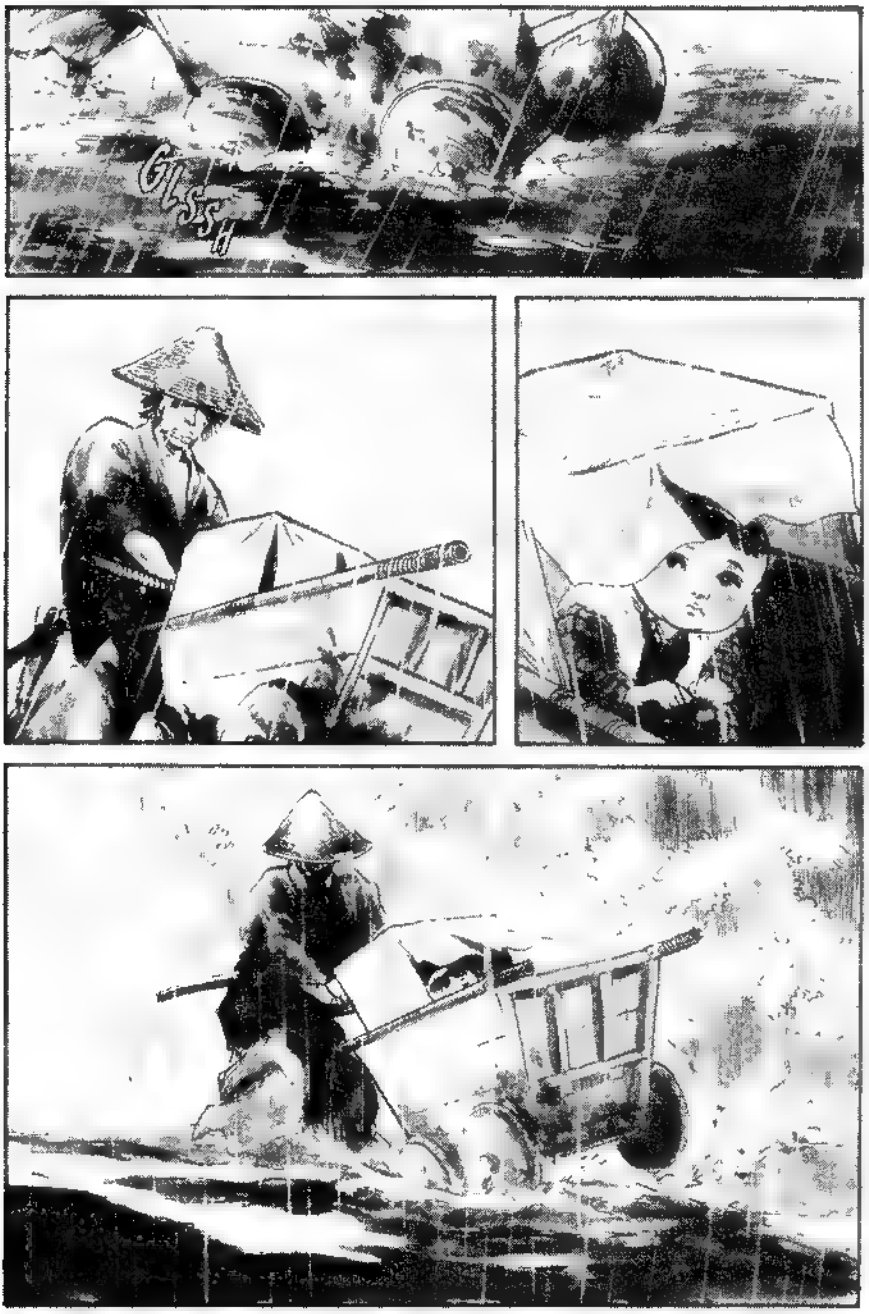


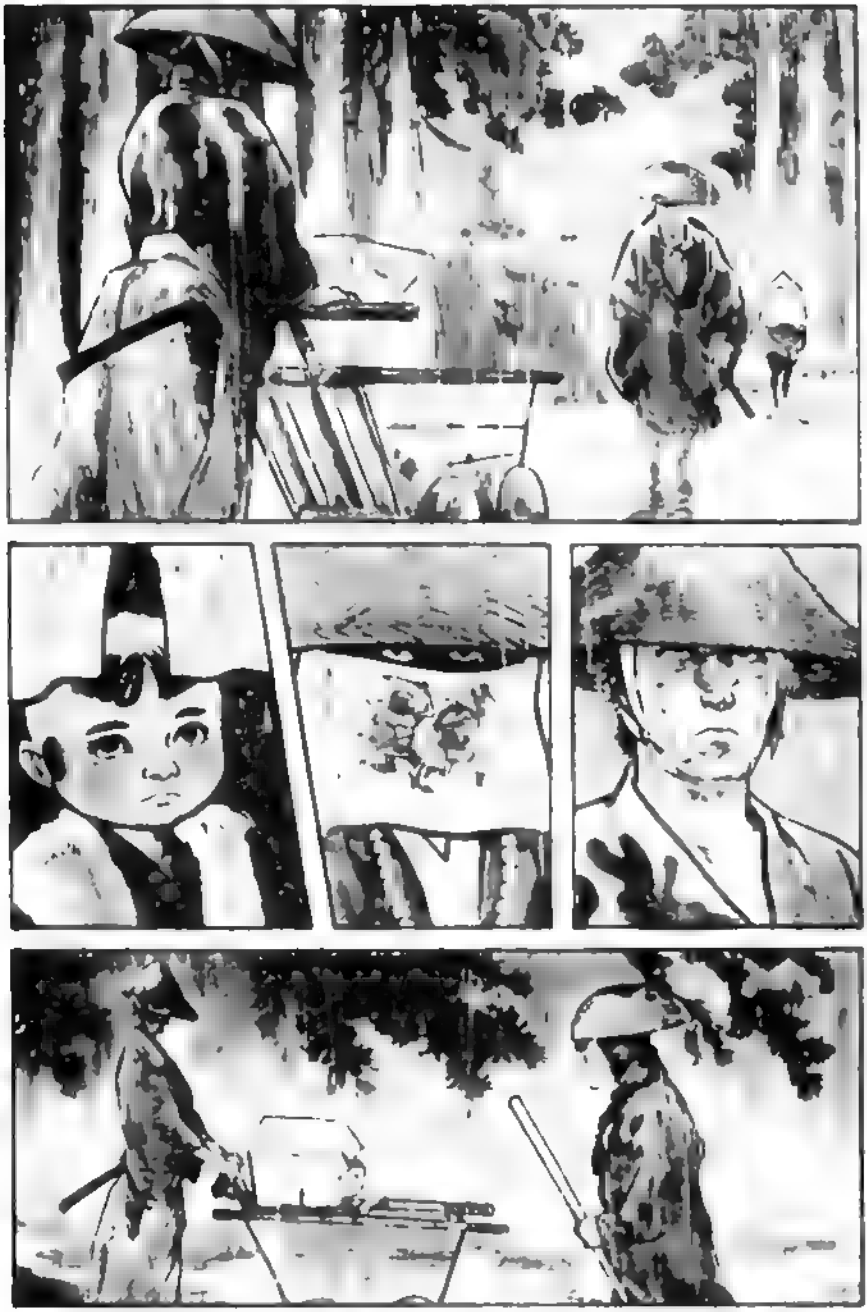




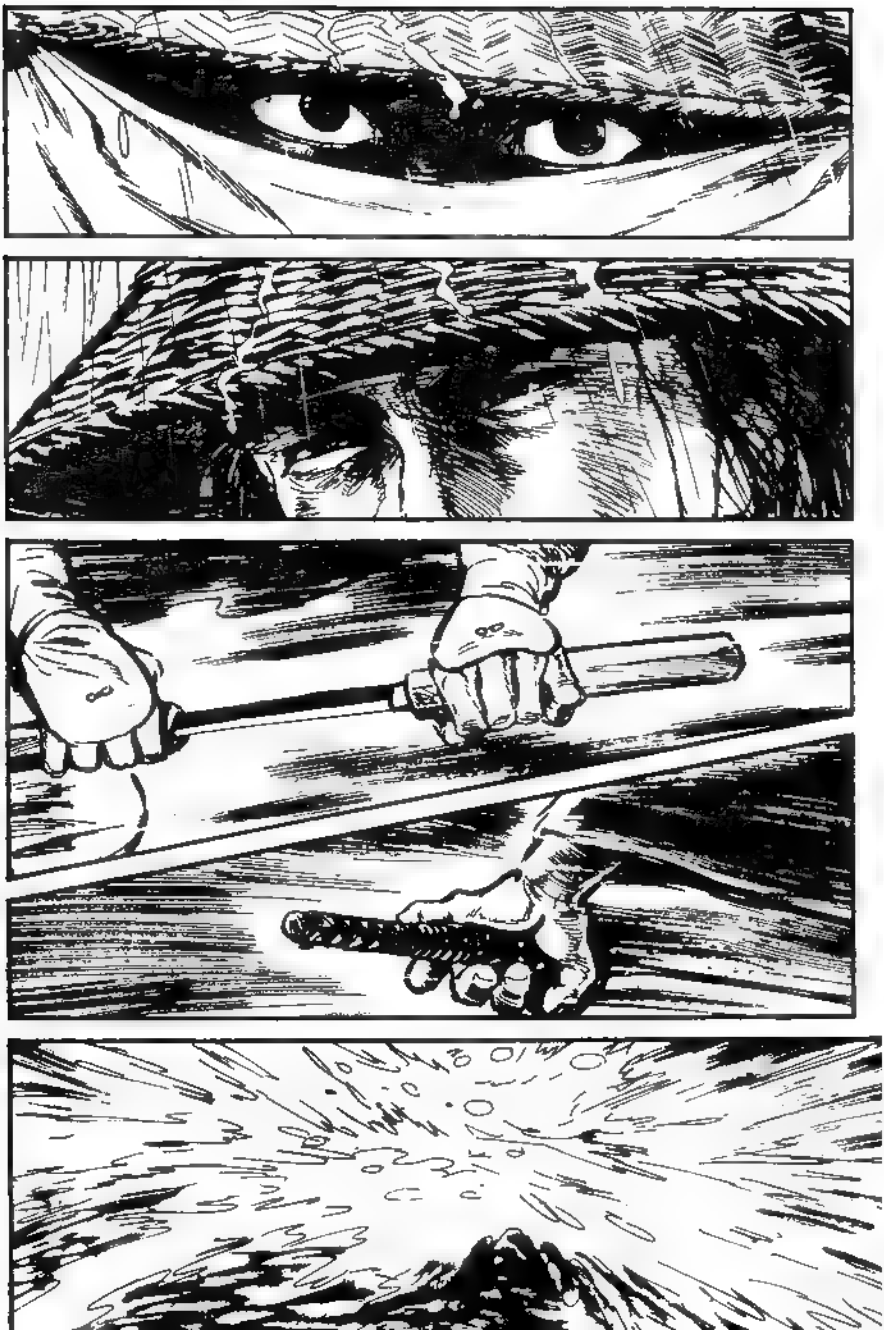


*INN YOSHINOYA


GLSSH



EXCUSE ME
THAT GOZUMBIU YOU WEAR
FOR LONE WOLF AND CUB?
YOU SIR?
SO THEY CALL ME



KANGG
HRGG!

YOU WAITED FOR ME TO DRAW, YET WE STRUCK AS ONE
INCREDIBLE SPEED WORTHY OF THE FORMER KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN, ŌGAMI ITTŌ
HERE ONE HUNDRED RYŌ THEY SAY YOU WANT FIVE THIS IS ONE FIFTH

PLEASE ACCEPT IT
A TEST? OF MY ASSASSIN SKILLS?

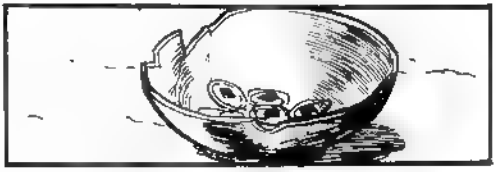
INDEED. SIXTEEN OF OUR BEST, ALL WEARING THE MARK OF GOZUMEZU
TRAVELING THE FIVE BYWAYS, THE RIVER ROUTES, THE COASTAL WATERWAYS

I SERVE LORD MATSUDAIRA OF TANBA KAMEYAMA
I AM AYABE UKON

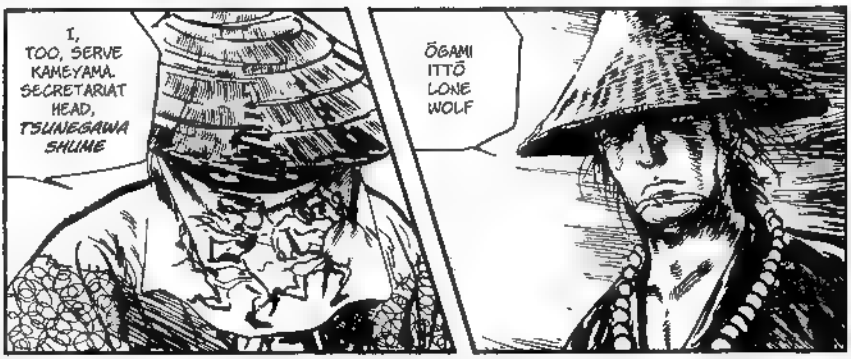
I MUST HEAR THE DETAILS BEFORE I ACCEPT

WE KNOW THIS
FIVE OF US WILL TEST YOUR SWORD. I, THE FIRST THEN EACH WILL OFFER.
ONE-HUNDRED RYŌ
AND PART OF THE STORY
THIS
IS YOUR SIGN.
FROM ME

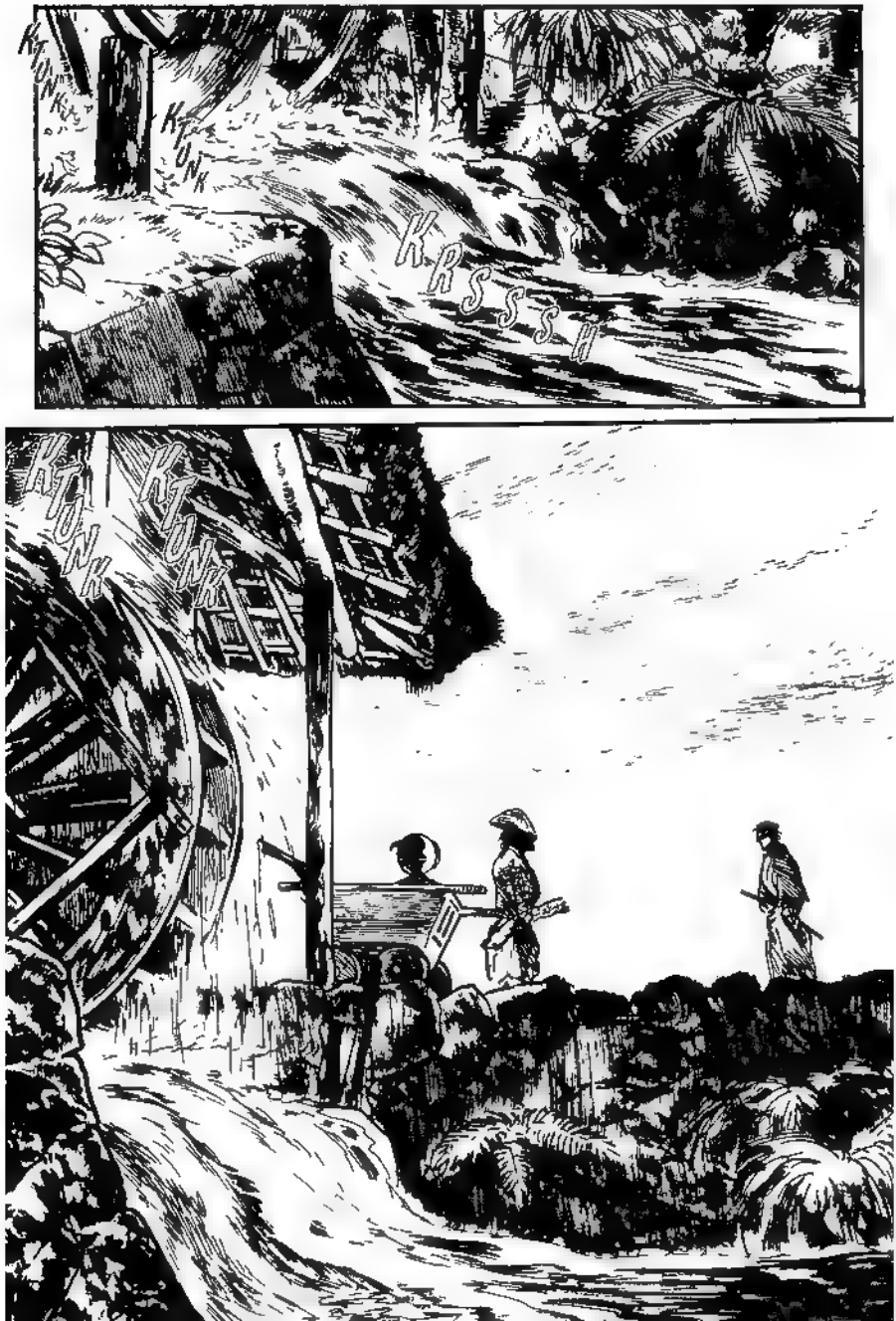
SPLSH
TANBA KAMEYAMA HAN FIVE TO TEST US
SIXTEEN TO SEEK US WHY...?



ALMS FOR THE POOR


I, TOO, SERVE KAMEYAMA. SECRETARIAT HEAD, TSUNEGAWA SHIME
ŌGAMI ITTŌ LONE WOLF

HOLD. I MUST NOTIFY THE NEXT


KTUNK
KTUNK
KRSSSH
KTUNK
KTUNK

MY SKILLS ARE MODEST, YET I REQUEST A TEST
SHOULD YOU DEFEAT ME, COLLECT THE HUNDRED RYŌ AND MIGHT I ASK YOU TO WEAR THE JUZU, BURDENSOME THOUGH IT BE?
VERY WELL.

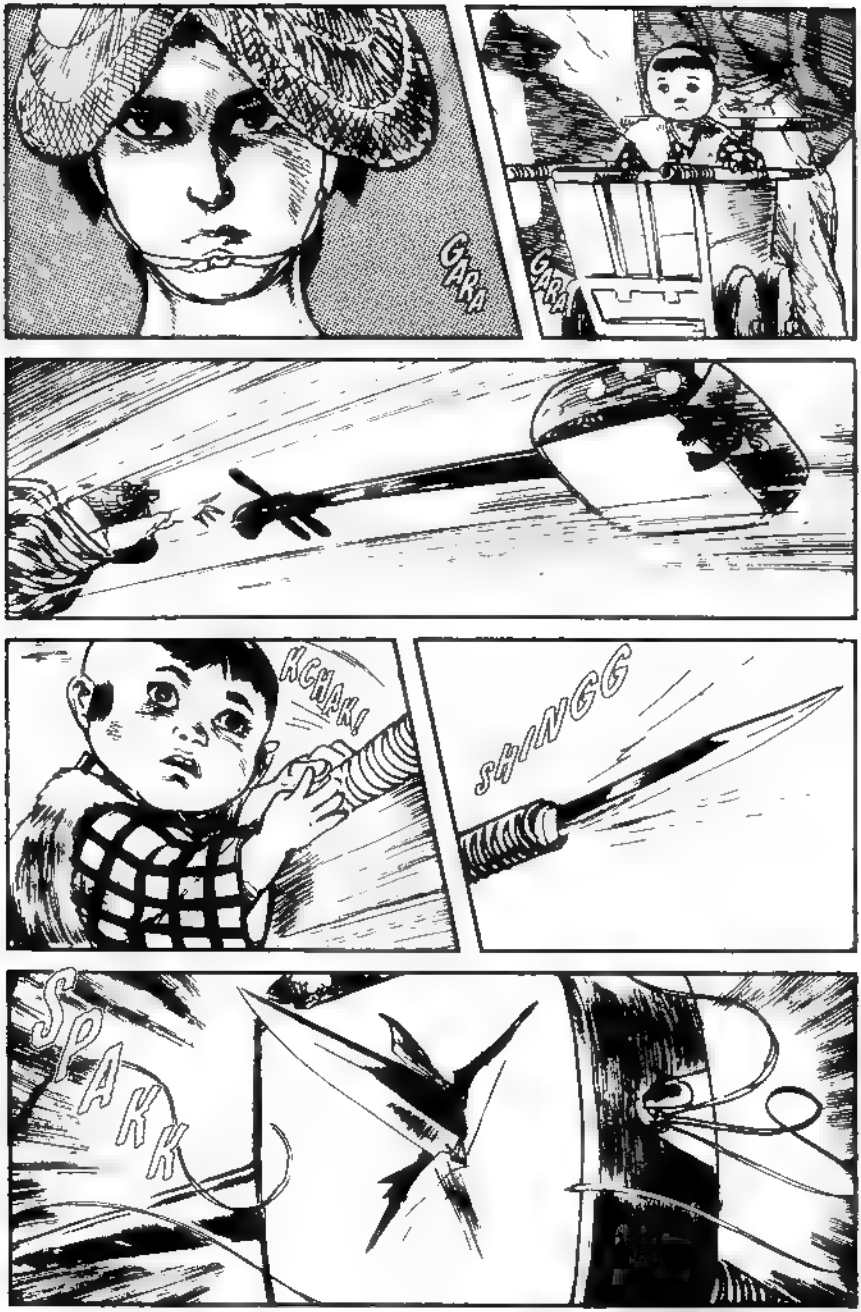
THE HEIR OF KAMEYAMA IS A GIRL.
WHAT..?!
UNTIL THREE YEARS AGO, OUR LORD WAS CHILDLESS.
HIS DAUGHTER CAME LATE IN LIFE, AND HE DOTES CEASELESSLY UPON HER.
HE REPORTED HER TO THE SHÖGUN AS A SON, AND IS RAISING HER AS A BOY
IF THE TRUTH COMES OUT, OUR CLAN IS FINISHED

WHSSH
FWHTT
SKCCH

I BEG YOU.. THE CLAN
KCHAK

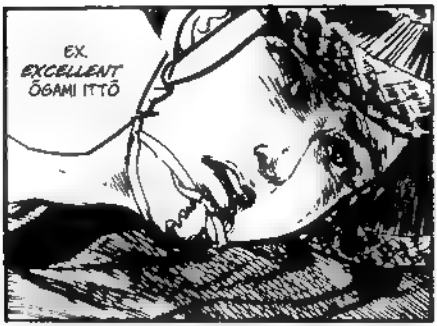
SAVE. . OUR CLAN.
NAMING A FEMALE HEIR, DECEIVING THE SHŌGUN. .
CHNG
AND THE CHILD ALREADY THREE.
SKSSHHH
SPSSHHH

GARA GARA
GARA GARA
GARA GARA

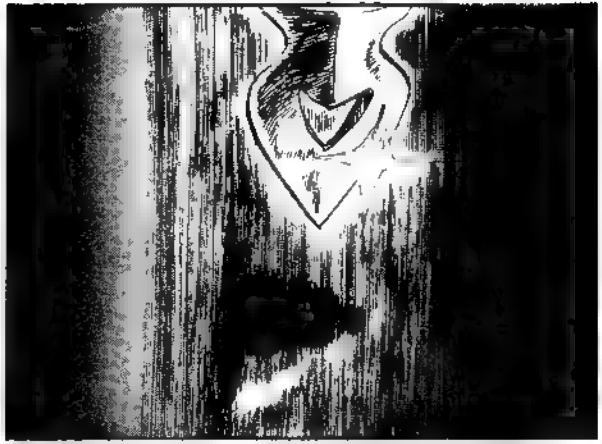

GARA
GARA
KCHAK!
SHINGG
SPAK

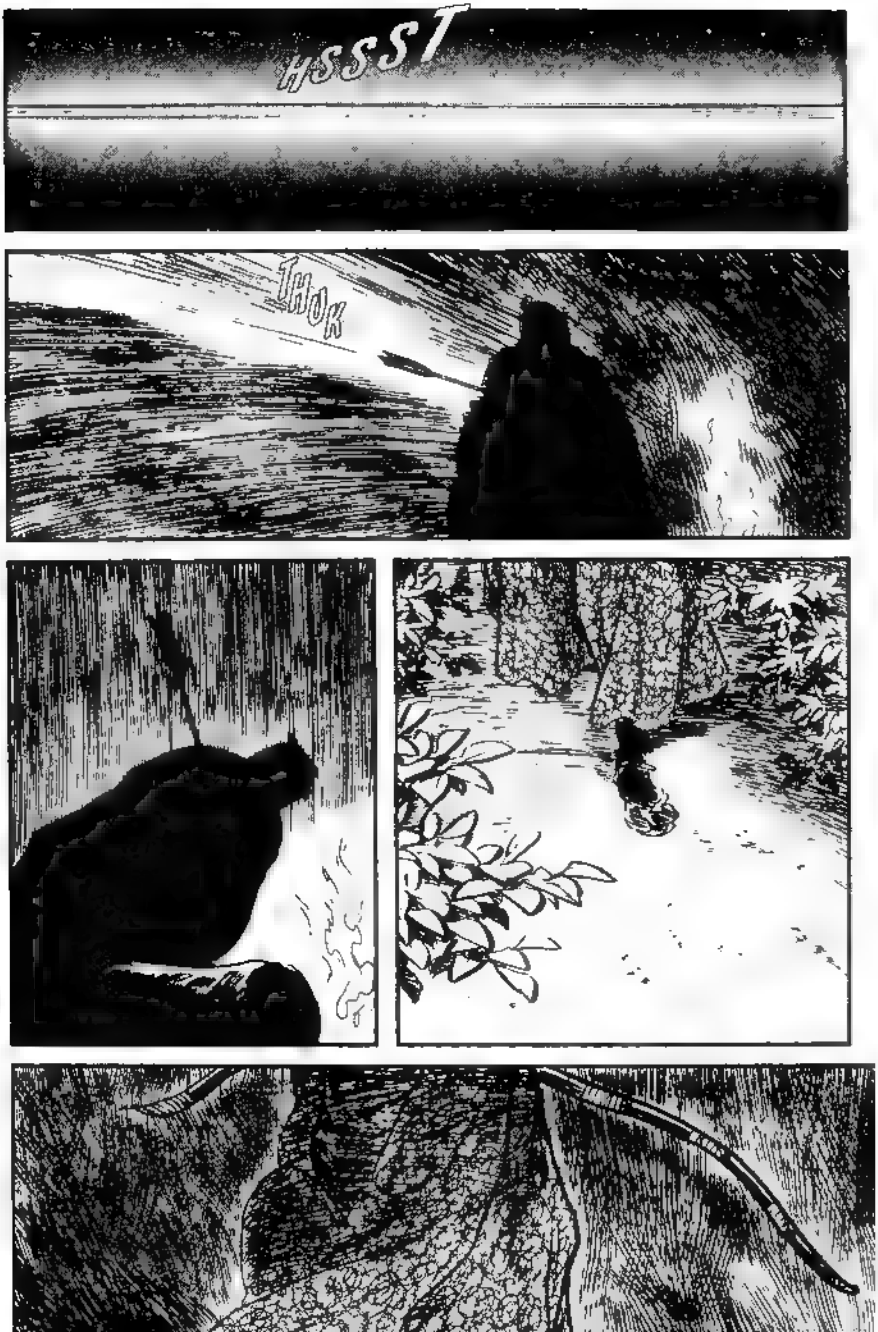
I SERVE PRINCE MATSUMARU!
SHIRASAKA NAMIE! THERE IS YOUR FIFTH!

CHOK

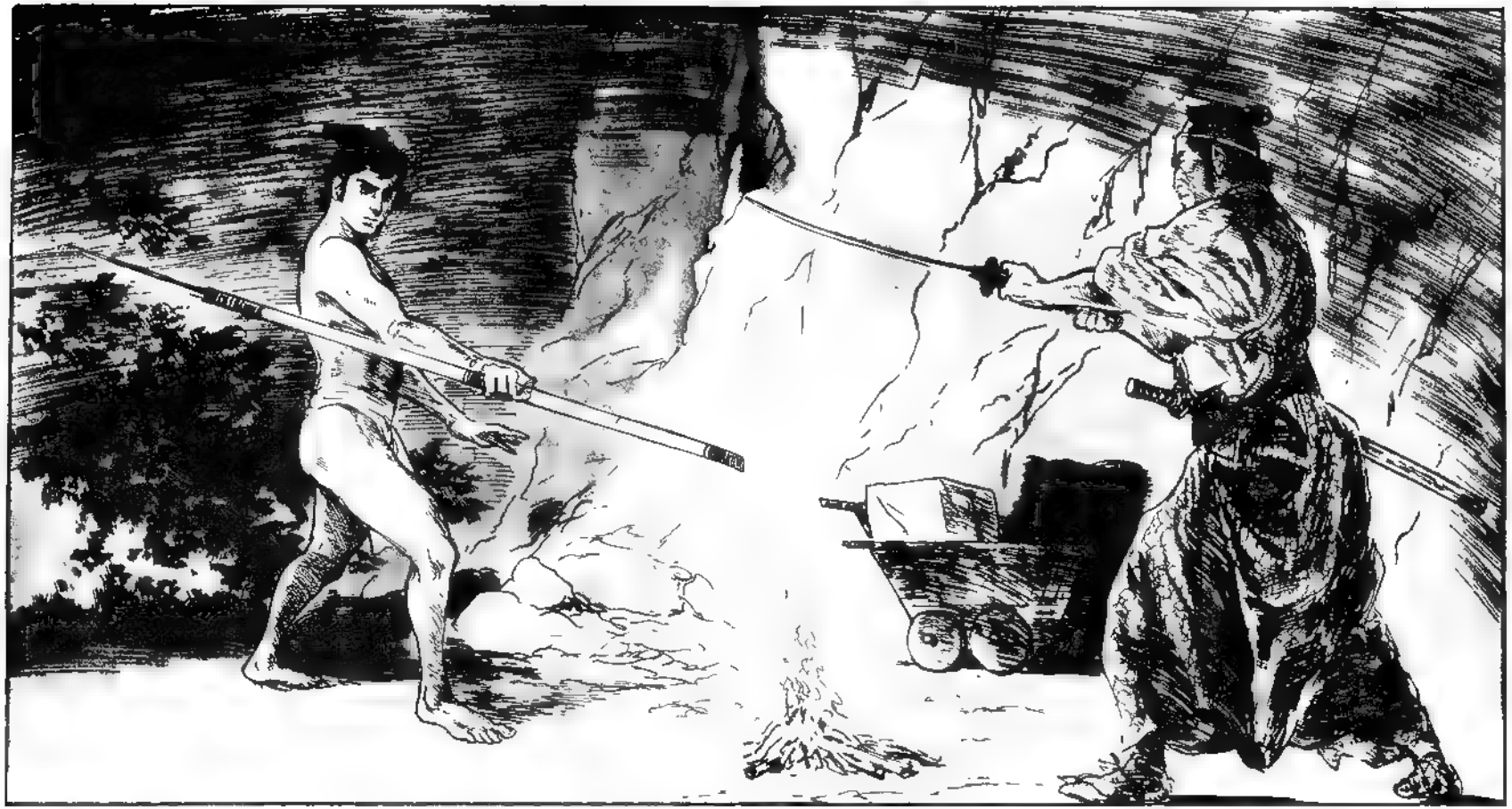

EX.
EXCELLENT
ŌGAMI ITTŌ

THE SECOND STRONGER
AND NOW HER A WOMAN, YET DEADLY ENOUGH TO BE THE THIRD
WHO NEXT ?




#SSST
THOK

!?!
THE FOURTH CHALLENGER ...?
INDEED!
KAMEYAMA HAN... MIURA GENNAI!
I HOLD ONE-HUNDRED RYŌ TAKE IT IF YOU CAN!
UNDER-STOOD!
SHING



#MangaProject on irc.Dal.net
presents: Lone Wold and Cub

WHSSSSH
THOKK

KCCH
SKSSH

KREE!
KREE!
TWAPP
TH. THERE IS TIME BEFORE I DIE
I WILL EXPLAIN THE SITUATION. TO MY FINAL BREATH

THE CHIEF INSPECTOR IN EDO HAS LEARNED FROM THE GRASS THAT OUR HEIR IS A GIRL
THE "GRASS" ..?!
AYE. YOU KNOW THE Ō-METSUKE INOUE CHIKUGO-NO-KAMI IS A STUDENT OF YAGYŪ SWORDSMANSHIP, A DISCIPLE OF RETSUDŌ, OF THE URA-YAGYŪ
HE'S EVEN TAKEN A YAGYŪ WOMAN AS HIS WIFE, SEALING HIS TIES BY MARRIAGE. HE'S AT RETSUDŌ'S BECK AND CALL.

THE GRASS HE COMMANDS ARE THE SHŌGUN'S SATOIRI-NINJA.
THEY SETTLE IN A HAN, SPYING, FATHER TO SON, SON TO GRANDSON.
FERRETING OUT SECRETS, INFORMING THE Ō-METSUKE.
THEY PUT DOWN ROOTS, SPROUT AND GROW. THUS, THE GRASS
AND IT'S THE URA-YAGYŪ WHO RUN THE SATOIRI-NINJA
THE URA-YAGYŪ AND THE SHŌGUN'S INSPECTOR ARE ONE!

PRINCE MATSUMARU LIVES IN EDO. BUT THE GRASS IN OUR HAN STILL FOUND OUR SECRET, AND TOLD THE Ō-METSUKE

WE MOVED HEAVEN AND EARTH TO FIND AND KILL THEM ALL. BUT TOO LATE.
YET THERE IS STILL NO PROOF THE PRINCE S REALLY A PRINCESS. AND NOT EVEN THE Ō-METSUKE CAN MOVE WITHOUT HARD EVIDENCE

SO HE CAME UP WITH A SCHEME. WITH HIMSELF AS GO-BETWEEN.
HE'S PROPOSED A MARRIAGE BETWEEN PRINCE MATSUMARU AND THE SHŌGUN'S ELEVENTH PRINCESS!
TH. THE SHŌGUN CAN'T BE REFUSED WE AGREED, BUT ONLY WITH A DESPERATE PLAN.
THE PRINCE IS ONLY THREE. IF THEY MARRY AND A PRINCESS OF THE SHŌGUN'S CLAN COMES TO OUR CASTLE
IT WILL BE TEN YEARS AT LEAST BEFORE IT'S CONSUMMATED

WE...WE THINK ONLY OF THE CLAN. IF THE PRINCE SHOULD DIE YOUNG...THE PRINCESS CAN BE RE-MARRIED, TO AN ADOPTED HEIR.
UNORTHODOX, YES. BUT FOR THE SHŌGUN'S DAUGHTER, SUCH THINGS CAN BE ARRANGED.
ONLY INOUE CHIKUGO-NO-KAMI KNOWS. KILL HIM, AND WE ESCAPE THE JAWS OF THE TIGER!
I BEG YOU! YOU HATE THE YAGYŪ ASSASSINATE INOUE!
YOU'LL KILL MATSUMARU!?
IN-INDEED.. AFTER MARRIAGE WITH SHŌGUN'S FAMILY IS. FINAL..
AND THUS UNFAITHFUL WE SHALL DIE.. BRANDED AS TRAITORS SO BE IT

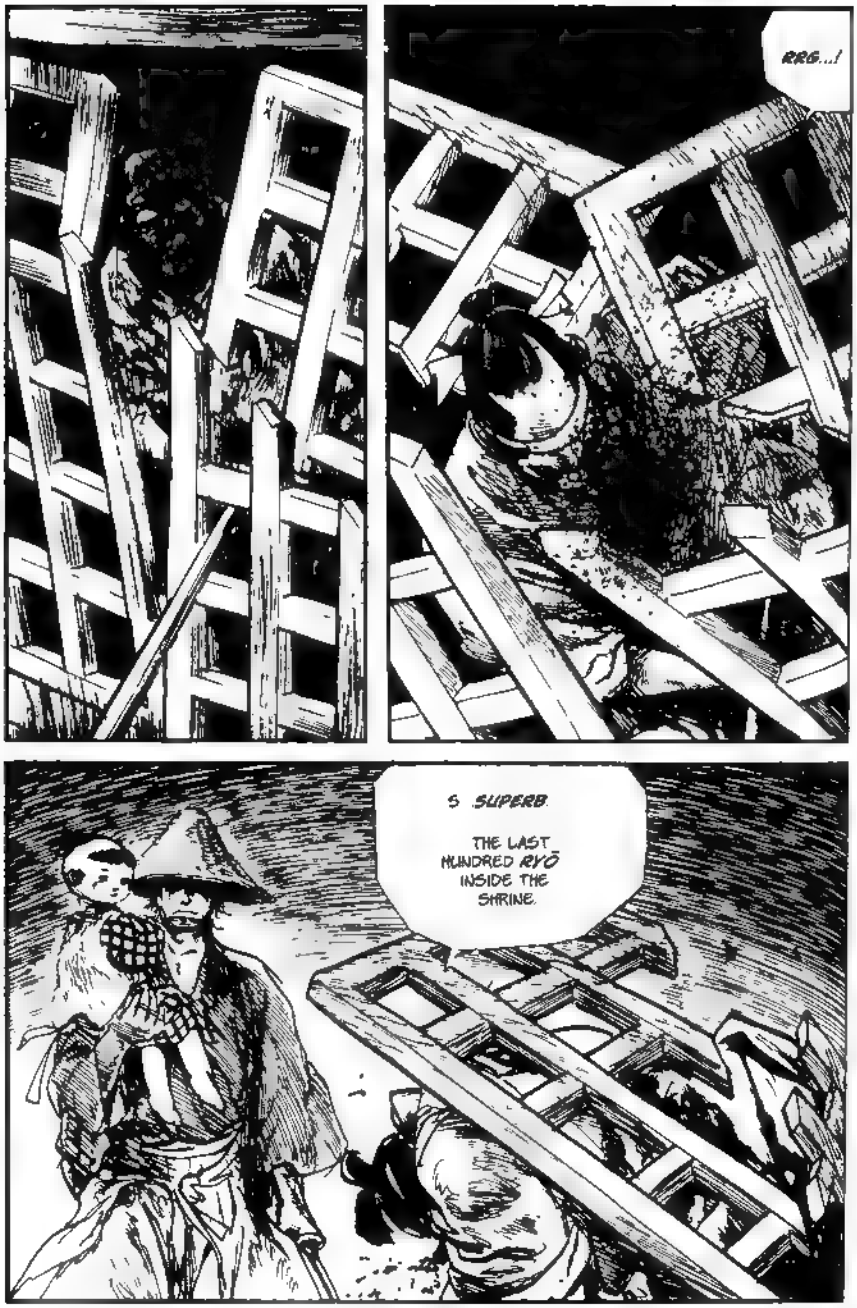
I BEG YOU! THE Ō-METSUKE, AND THE YAGYŪ WHO GUARD HIM.
THE FOOLISH LEADER SOWS, HIS RETAINERS REAP AGONY UNREQUITED

GARA
GARA

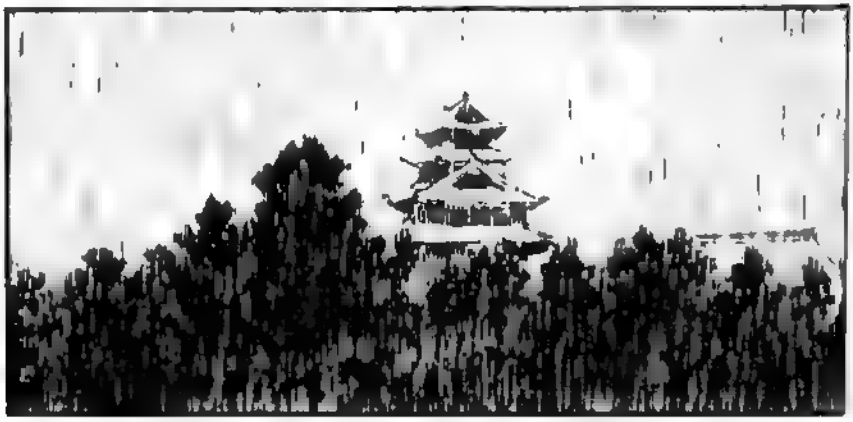
AH!

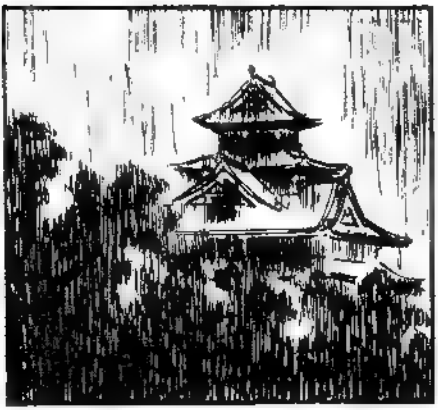
FWHN

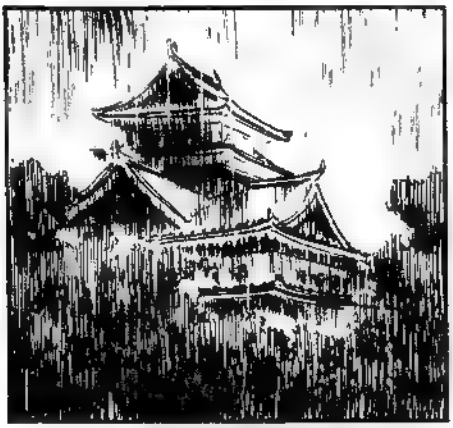
SHRAK

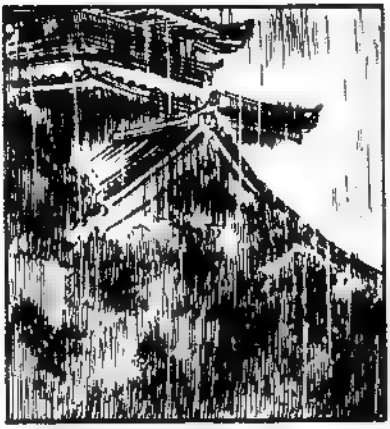

RRG...!
SUPERB.
THE LAST HUNDRED RYŌ INSIDE THE SHRINE.

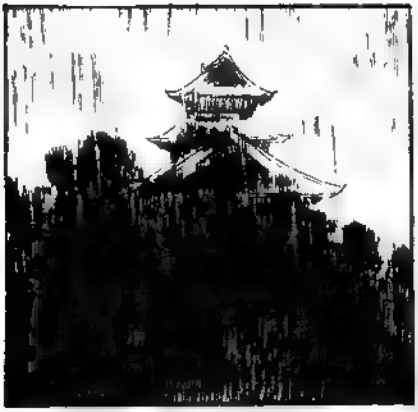
THE Ō-METSUKE HAS LEFT EDO, ENTERS KAMEYAMA.
HE SAYS HE'LL DISCUSS.. THE MARRIAGE. WITH OUR LORD.
TO THE CASTLE
OUR MEN WILL MEET YOU THERE. . ARRANGE ALL.
M. MAKE HASTE

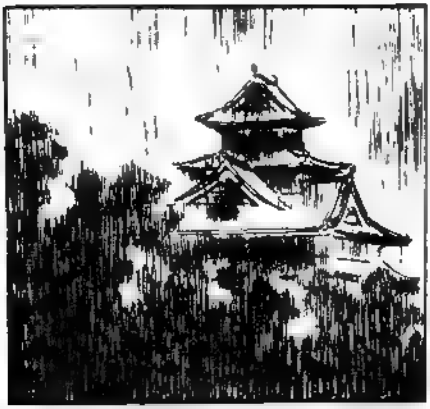


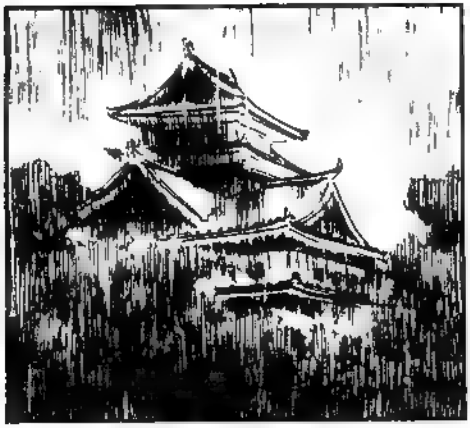




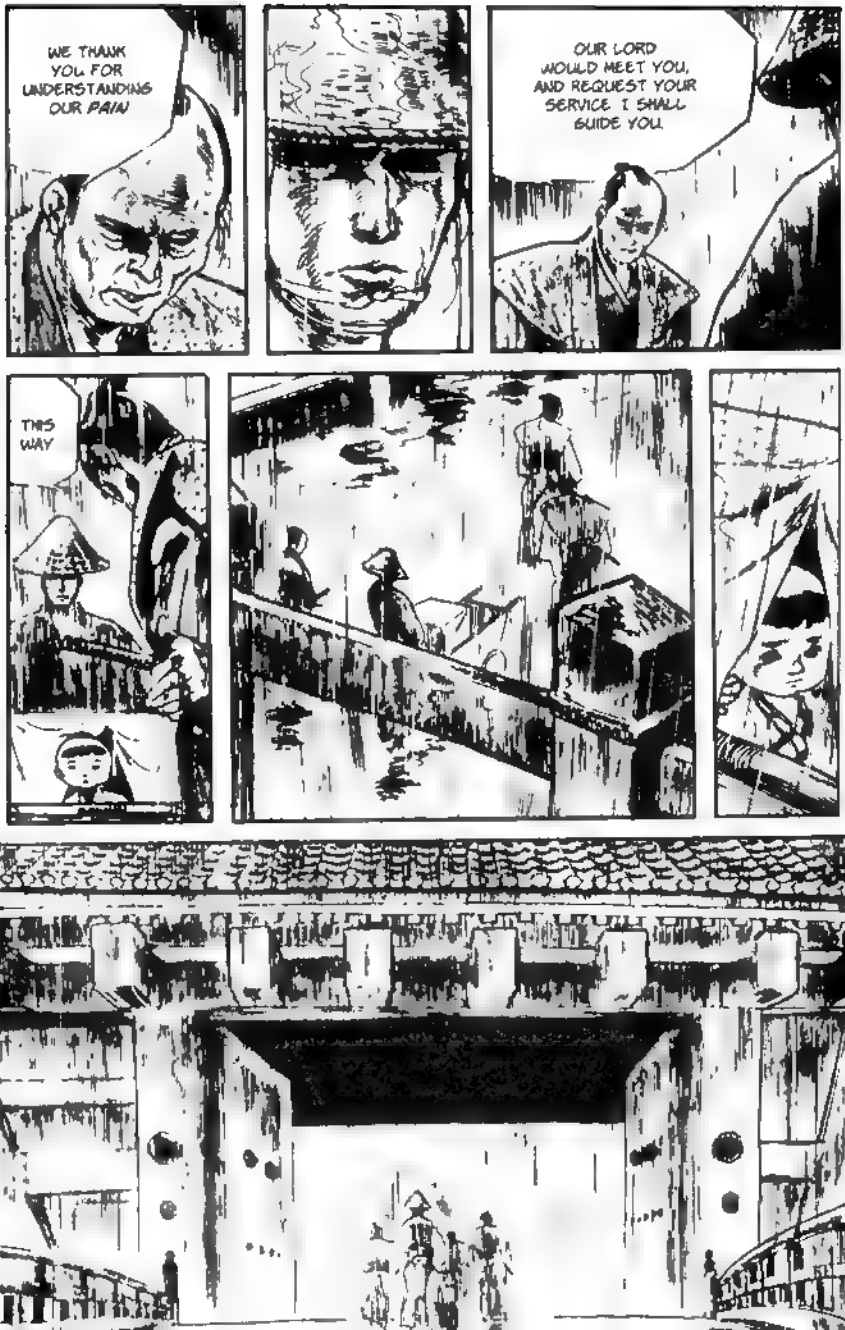




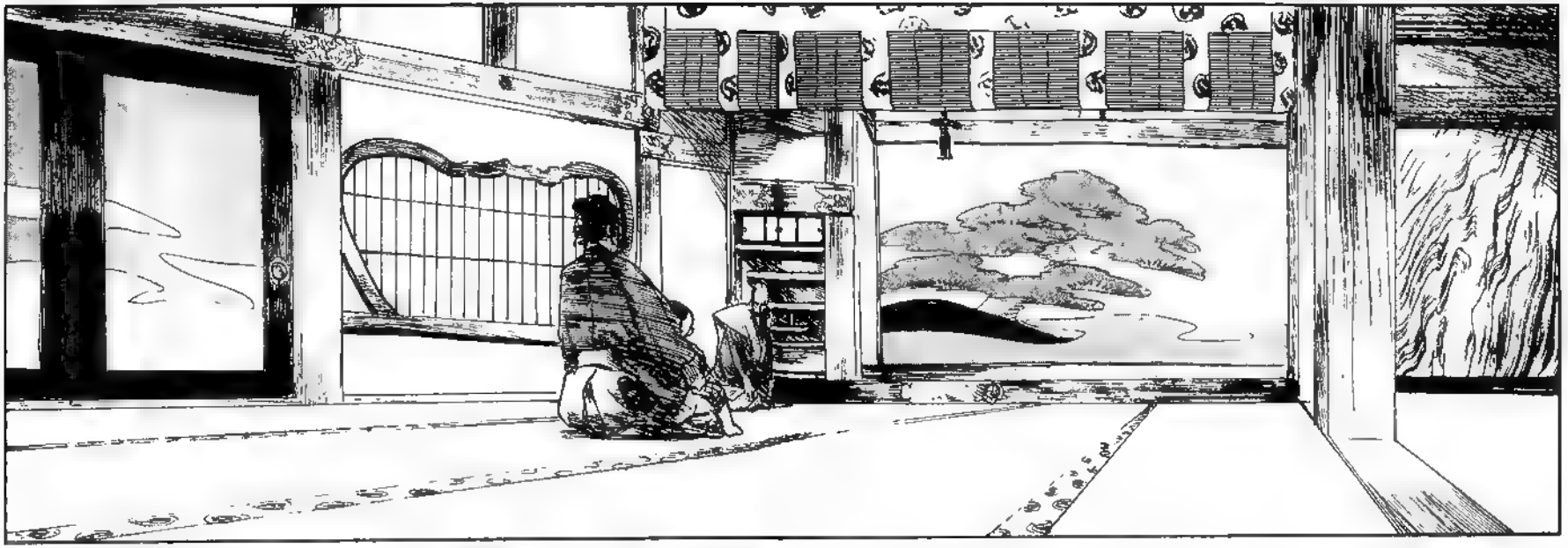




*KAMEYAMA HAN FIRST GATE
ŌGAMI-DONO...?
INDEED
MINOWA MONDONOSHŌ, KARŌ AND CASTLE WARDEN.

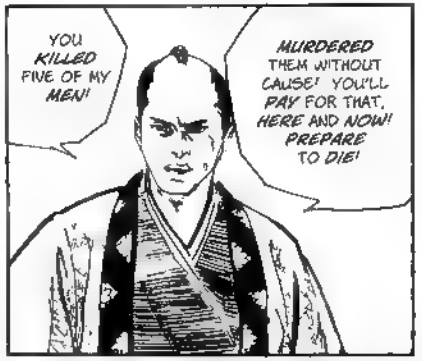

WE THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING OUR PAIN
OUR LORD WOULD MEET YOU, AND REQUEST YOUR SERVICE. I SHALL GUIDE YOU.
THIS WAY

SKREEEK
SKREEEK
KCHOOM
OSAMI-DONO WE MUST KEEP YOUR SWORD



OUR LORD ENTERS!

YOU'RE ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!
I AM, MY LORD


YOU KILLED FIVE OF MY MEN!
MURDERED THEM WITHOUT CAUSE! YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT, HERE AND NOW! PREPARE TO DIE!

KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!

DAMN IT! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
K-KILL HIM!
.....!
.....

THEY GAVE THEIR *LIVES* FOR HEIR *HAN!*
THE LAST EFFECTS AND REMAINS OF *AYABE* AND HIS FOUR *COMRADES!* TAKE AND *HONOR* THEM.

NO DOUBT YOU MUST TRADE *OUR* LIVES FOR THE SAFETY OF KAMEYAMA. YET WE LIVE IN *MEIFUMADŌ*, SPURNING THE *SIX PATHS* AND THE *FOUR LIVES* WE *MUST* ACHIEVE OUR QUEST
WE CANNOT DIE.

YOU EXPECTED THIS? AND STILL YOU CAME?!
YES.
BUT HOW ?!
I SAW THE AGONY ON THE FACES OF THOSE WHO MET US
THE AGONY OF THEIR DECISION— CHOOSE THE CLAN? OR SHIDŌ?
IT'S TORTURE FOR A BUSHI TO LIE, TO TURN HIS BACK ON THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR.
B-BUT WHY SURRENDER YOUR DŌTANUKI?
RESPECT FOR THESE FIVE LOYAL RETAINERS

AND TO FOLLOW MY ASSASSIN'S ROAD! LONE WOLF AND CUB! PAID FOR WITH THE LIVES OF WARRIORS!
THE ASSASSIN OVERCOMES ALL OBSTACLES WHAT HE ACCEPTS, HE DOES! THAT IS MY CONVICTION
SEVER MY ARMS HACK OFF MY LEGS CRUSH THESE BONES! THOUGH I BE REDUCED TO DUST I WILL KILL MY ENEMY!

YOU'RE. YOU'RE TOO LATE
A STEP . ONE SINGLE STEP TOO LATE
MY HEART, TOO BROKEN

INOUE CHIKUGO-NO-KAMI! Ō-METSUKE!
YOU! YOU MISERABLE CUR
KII-NO-KAMI-DONO! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
DIDN'T I PROMISE TO SPARE YOU AND YOUR HAN IF HE DIES?!
NNG. . . . .
OF COURSE, IF YOU'D RATHER PAY FOR MAKING A FEMALE YOUR HEIR, LYING TO THE SHŌGUN, AND HIRING LONE WOLF AND CUB TO MURDER ME, THAT CAN BE ARRANGED!

WELL? KII-DONO?!
K-KILL HIM! NOW!
YOU MEN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! CUT HIM DOWN!
THE WOLF HAS NO FANGS! JUST ONE OF YOU CAN DO IT! YOUR CLAN HANGS IN THE BALANCE!

IT ,IT'S FOR THE CLAN! FORGIVE ME, ŌGAMI-DONO!
SMAKK
KILLING ME CANNOT SAVE KAMEYAMA HAN!

BELIEVE HIM IF YOU WISH BUT NOTHING CAN CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU REPORTED A FEMALE AS HEIR
AND IF THE Ō-METSUKE KNOWS THAT, AND LETS YOU GET AWAY WITH IT HE WILL PAY THE PRICE AS WELL!
THE YAGYŪ WILL NEVER PERMIT IT!
WE KNOW THAT! YET WE CAN'T ADVANCE NOR RETREAT! WE CAN ONLY KILL YOU.
..AND CUT OUR STOMACHS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!
WE CAN ONLY PROSTRATE OURSELVES BEFORE THE YAGYŪ, AND BEG FOR OUR HAN! FORGIVE ME..!

SHINKEN SHIRABA-DORI! SWORD SECRET OF THE YAGYŪ! TRAPPED, THE BLADE CANNOT BE PULLED, CANNOT BE THRUST! LIKE KAMEYAMA'S DESTINY!
HRM...!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO DEFEAT IT.
LET IT GO!
ABANDON THE CLAN! LIVE IN SHIDŌ!
FIND LIFE IN DEATH!!

RKK?!
HRGG
AH?!
BASTARD!

KANGG
SKSSH
AUGH!

BETSUDŌ! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!
ITTŌ! YOU'VE WALKED INTO THE KILLING ZONE, YOU LAUGHABLE FOOL. I'VE KNOWN ABOUT KAMEYAMA HAN FOR THREE YEARS FROM THE DAY THEY REPORTED THEIR HEIR!

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT PROVE USEFUL SOMEDAY FOR TRAPPING YOU INSIDE A CASTLE STRATEGY, ITTŌ. I KNEW I COULD CRUSH THEM WHENEVER I PLEASED.
AND YOU SWALLOWED IT! THE MOMENT KAMEYAMA HAN HIRED YOU AND YOU CAME TO THE CASTLE, YOU WERE FINISHED! POOR, PATHETIC ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
THE Ō-METSUKE? AN IMPERSONATOR!
YOU THOUGHT TO FIND LIFE IN DEATH KILLING THE Ō-METSUKE? WELL, THERE'S NOT MUCH LIFE IN A KAGEMUSHA!
MATSUDAIRA KII-NO-KAMI! HEAR THE SHŌGUN'S WILL!

DISINHERIT MATSUMARU!
ADOPT A MALE CHILD, REPORT YOUR HEIR ANEW, AND KAMEYAMA HAN SHALL BE EXONERATED
BEHOLD. I BRING LADY MATSUMARU FROM EDO
AAHH!!

MATSUMARU BEARS NO BLAME RAISE HER AS THE NOBLE LADY SHE IS!
BUT ONE CONDITION! ALL THIS SHALL BE GRANTED ONLY AFTER YOU KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
FOR YOUR CLAN'S SURVIVAL— KILL ITTŌ!
RETSUDŌ! I'VE BROKEN THE SECRET OF THE YAGYŪ LETTER!
WHAT?!

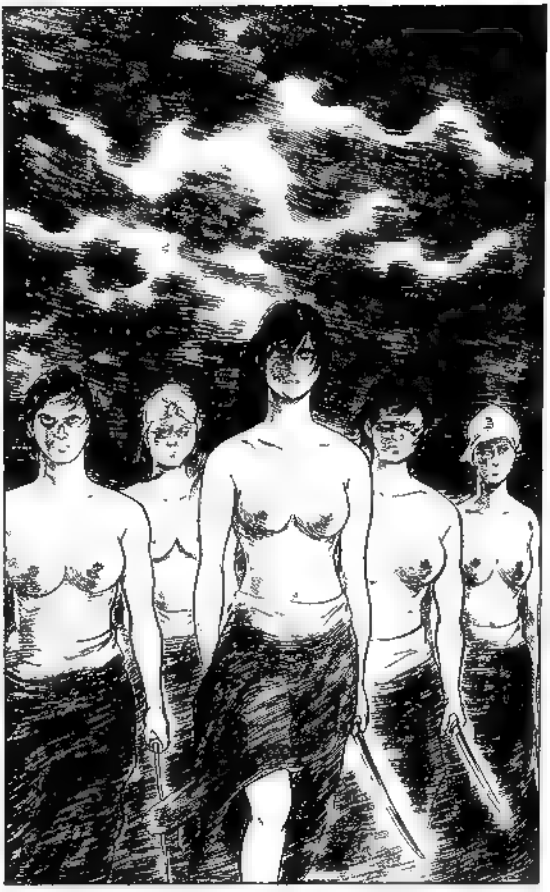
SHALL I SHOUT IT OUT, HERE AND NOW?!
SILENCE!
THERE'S NOTHING TO THAT LETTER! JUST WORDS!
THEN I'LL SPEAK!
THE SECRET OF THE LETTER IS—
NO, STOP!!
SPARE KAMEYAMA HAN. SPARE THEM, AND I'LL WAIT ONE MONTH BEFORE REVEALING THE SECRET
IF YOU WANT TO KILL US TO GET IT BACK
THEN NO MORE TRICKERY! FACE US IN ONE MONTH, IN OPEN BATTLE!
HRN.

ANSWER ME, RETSUDŌ!
RRG. . . . .
DAMN YOU, ŌGAMI!
LET HIM PASS!

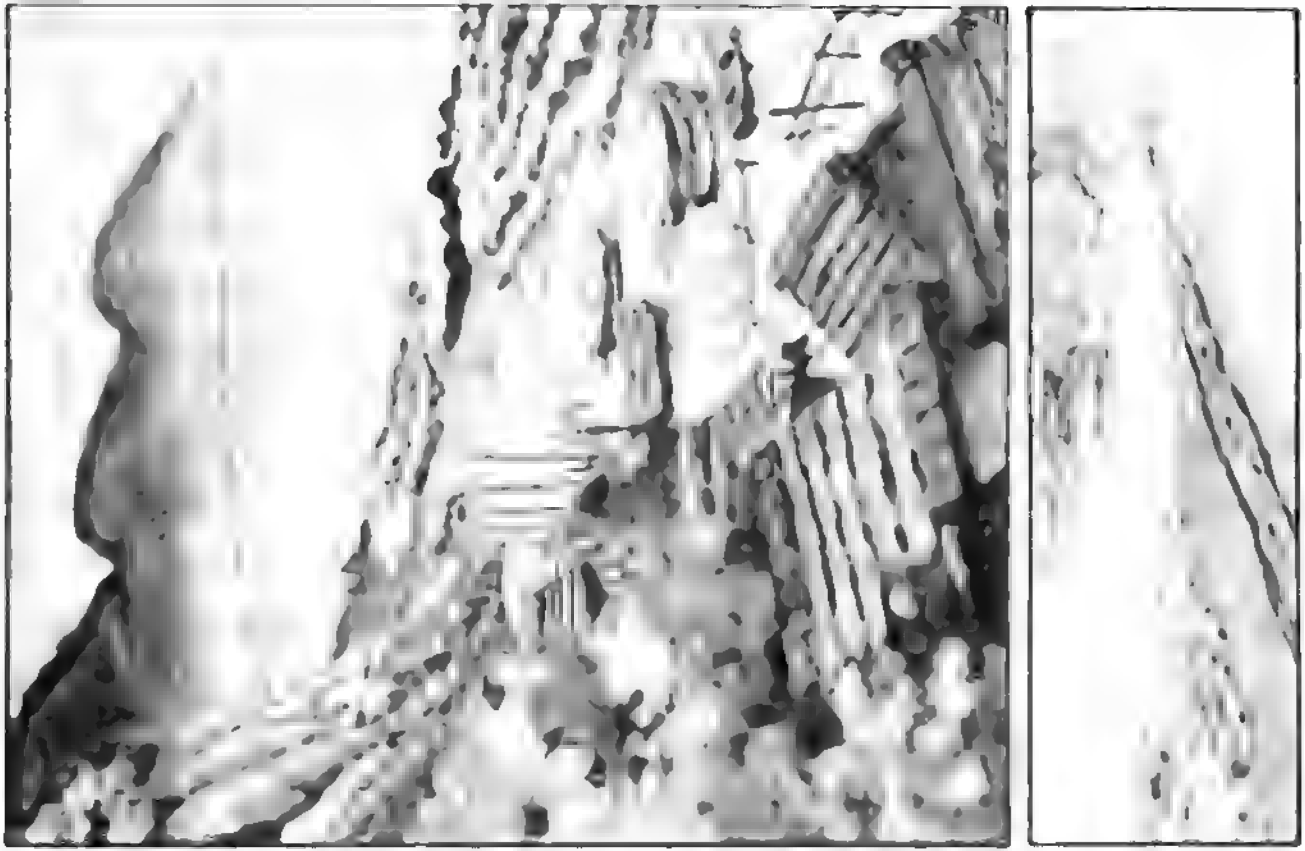
#MangaProject on irc.Dal.net
presents: Lone Wold and Cub

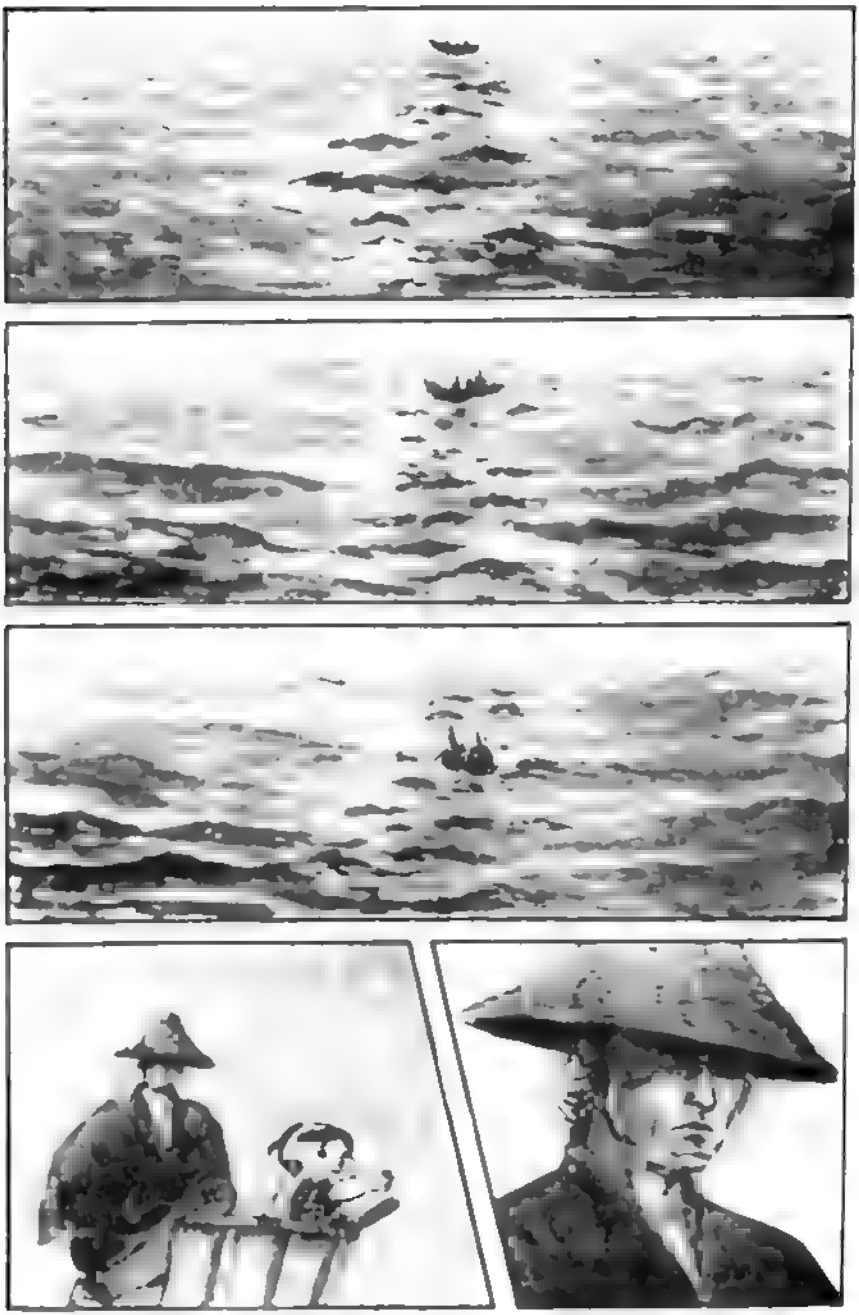
the seventy-fourth

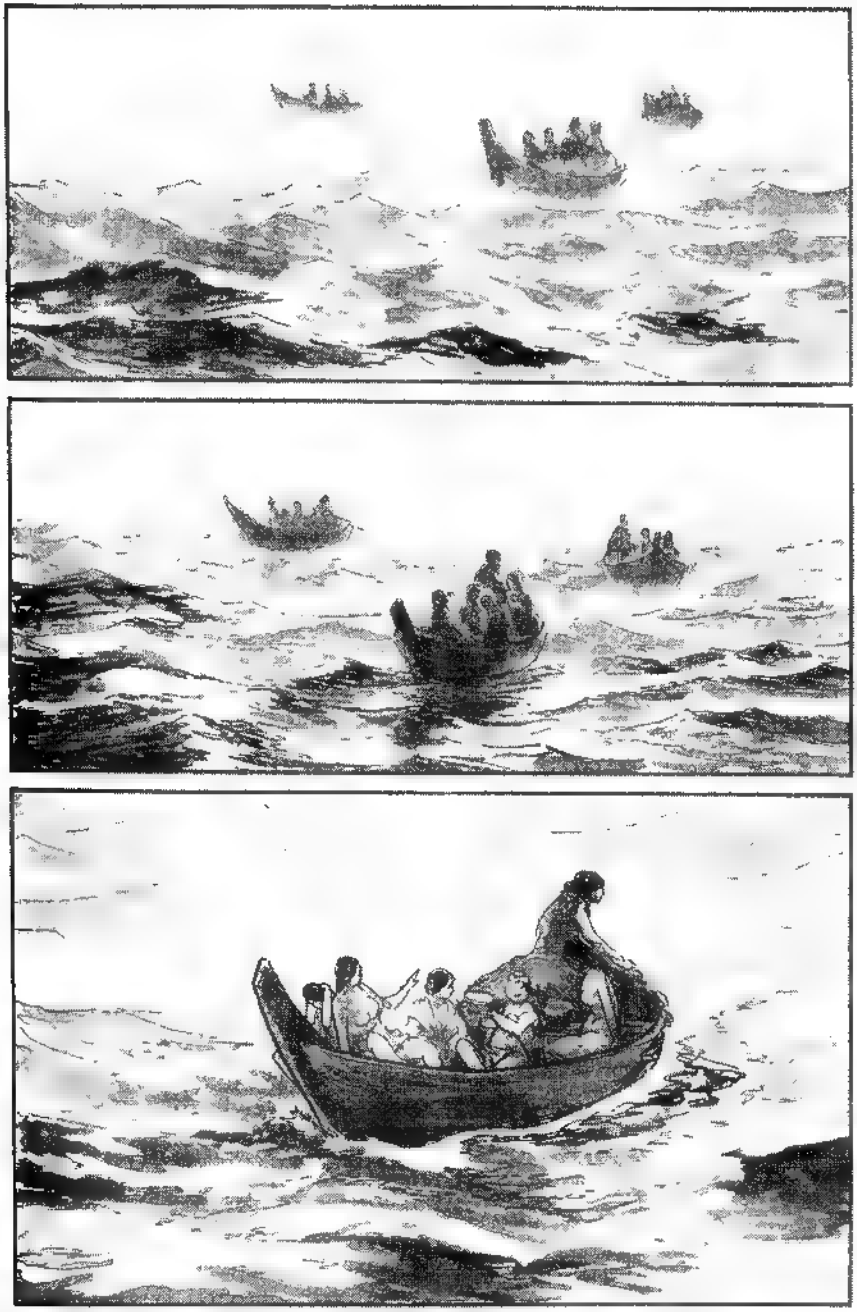
The Women of Sodeshi



CAPE KYŌGAMISAKI, ON THE
KYŌGAMISAKI
WAKASA
BAY

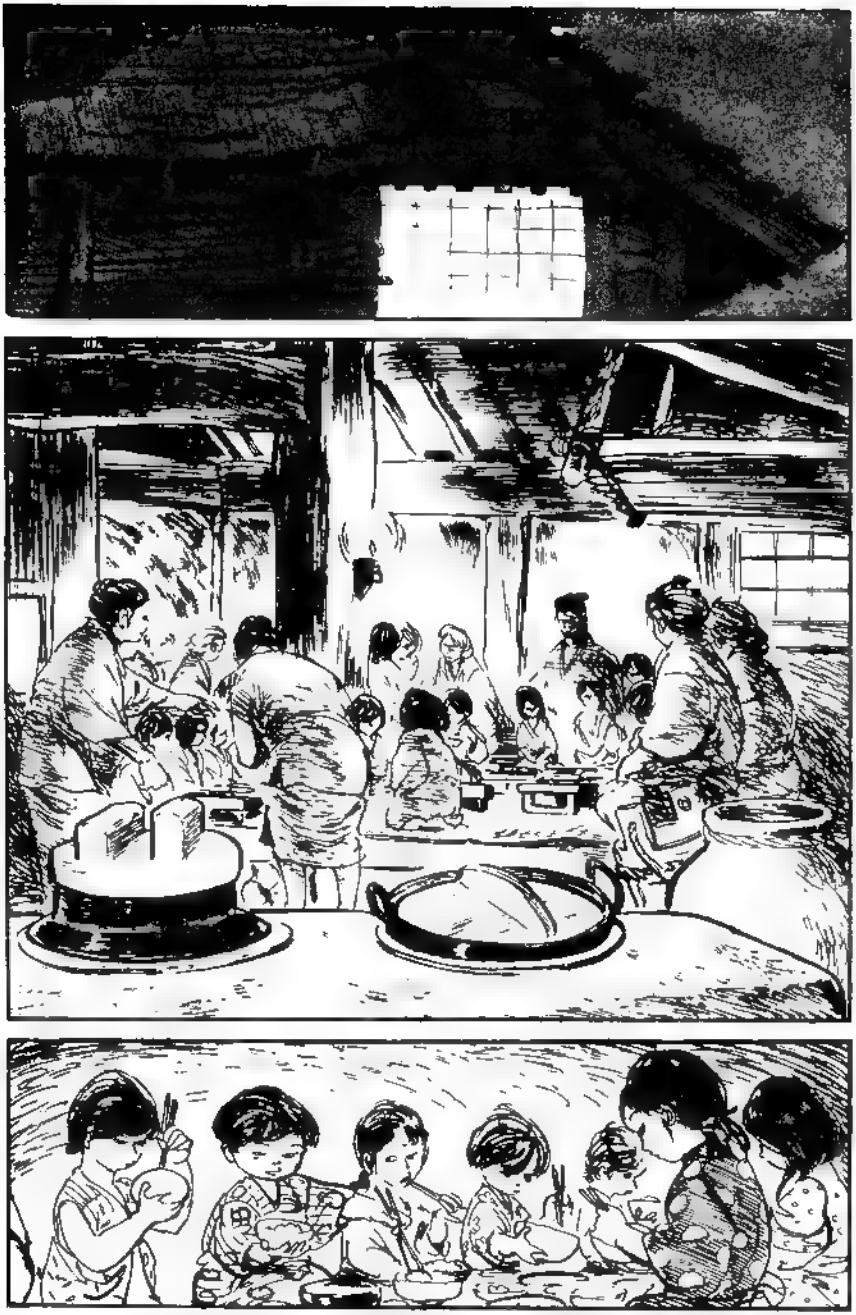






SKRSSH

WE SEEK A PLACE FOR THE NIGHT.
MY SON NEEDS SHELTER. I CAN PAY.
AIN'T MUCH T' OFFER, BUT YER WELCOME..
MY THANKS.



SURP GLRP
GLK GLK
GLLP GLLP
YAAHN RESSA!
THE OCEAN WOMEN OF SODESHI LAUNCH THEIR BOATS UPON THE SEA.
UPON THE SEA
OUT ON THE SWELL
TAKE THEIR BOATS AROUND THE CAPE

TO UNKNOWN COUNTRIES FAR AWAY
BRING THEIR BOATS
AGAINST THE SHORE
THE VILLAGE FOLK NEVER KNOW
HARVESTING SEAWEED, NIGHT BY DAY
THEN HOME ON THE FOAM THE WOMEN GO
THE ROBBER BOATS OF TANGO
THAT'S WHAT THE FAR FOLK SAY
YAHWREN!

YAHHREN NA YOH!
SHAN SHAN YAHHREN YOH!
SHAN SHAN!
ROW NO BOATS PAST INE, YOH!
RAISE NO SAILS PAST EJIRI, YOH!
POUR NO SAKE OFF SODESHI, YOH!
THE SODESHI WOMEN DRINK THEIR OWN THEIR SAKE OF SORROW
ALL THEIR OWN

SHAN SHAN!
JES' A SIP, O-SAMURAI?
I DON'T DRINK.
THET'S A SHAME.
GLU GLU
OUR MEN FOLK DONE GONE TO WORK IN OTHER LANDS, LONELY NIGHTS, THEY BE. .
WE GIT T'GETHER EVERY NIGHT, DRINKIN', SINGIN', EASIN' THE PAIN.
AIN'T NAUGHT T' CATCH IN SODESHI'S SEA, KIN'T LIVE OFF'A FISHIN' SO WE SODESHI WOMEN LEARN T' DIVE A'FORE WE KIN WALK WE GO HARVEST THE SEAWEED WHEN FOLK AIN'T WATCHIN' THEY CALLS US THE ROBBER BOATS OF TANGO.
LIVIN' LONELY AS DEATH, THINKIN' OF OUR MEN AND LI'L ONES WE'LL NE'ER SEE AG'IN.

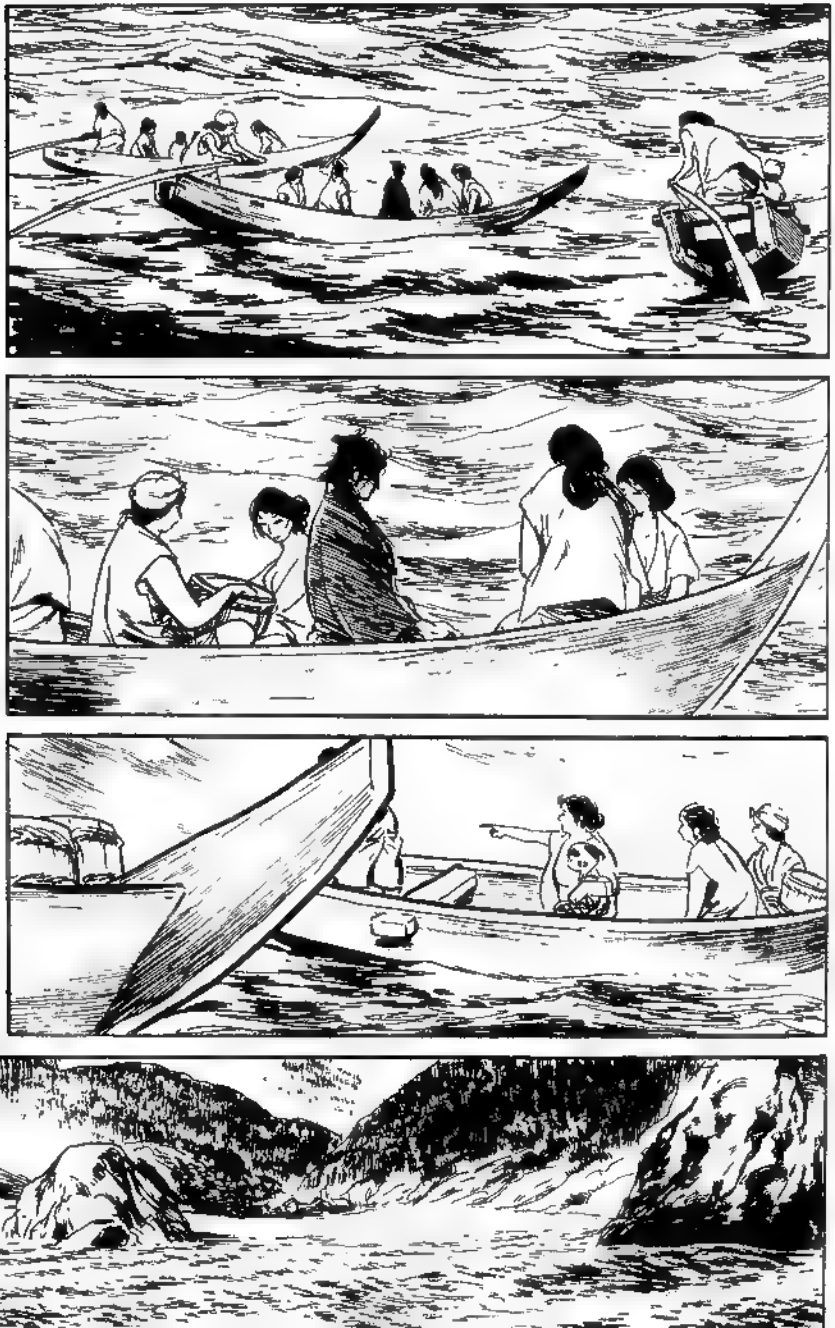
'COURSE THEY IS COMIN' BACK NEXT YEAR
HAD T' PUT MY LI'L ONE UP FOR ADOPTIN' THET'S WHY I TALK SO...
CUTE LAD, HE BE.
O'ER HERE, SWEETIE. COME 'ERE.
IT'S OKAY.
YE LI'L CUTIE!
HOW OLD YE BE?
THREE, BE YE! GOOD BOY!
LET ME HUG 'M, TOO.
C'MON, SWEETIE. COME T' GRANNY.

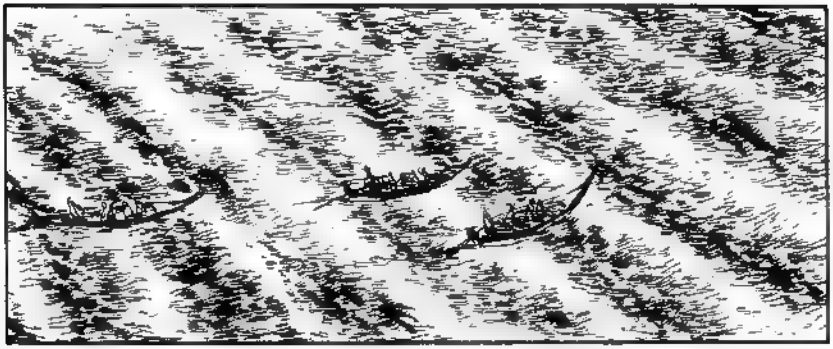
AHH.
NNG.
SNIFF

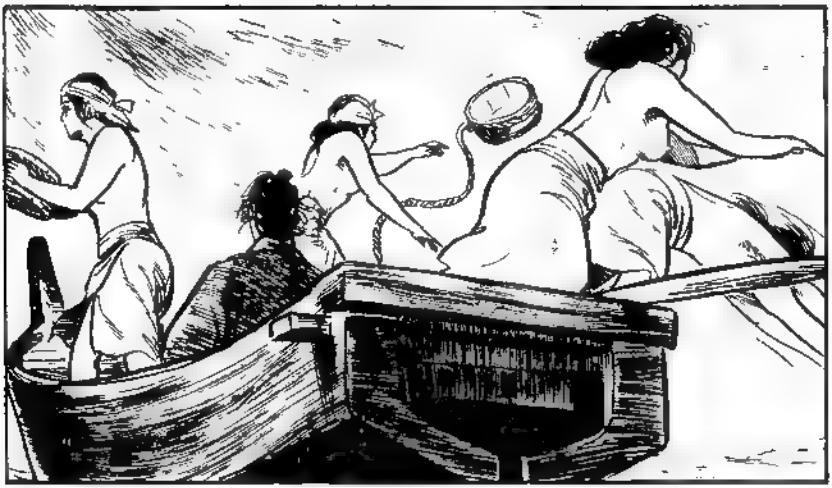
STOP Y'ER WHININ'!
SODESHI WOMEN NE'ER CRY!
SHE JES' SENT HER BOY FER ADOPTION, FAR AWAY WHERE HE KIN EAT

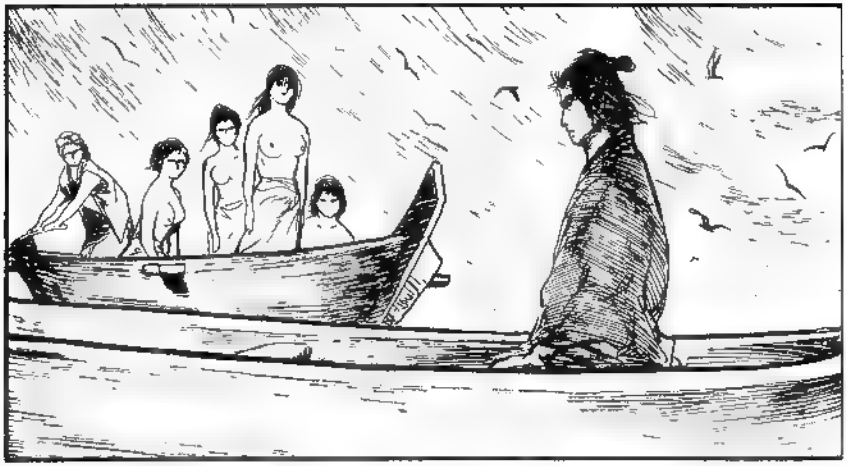
HE WAS SO SET ON SEEIN' US GET THET SEA-WEED

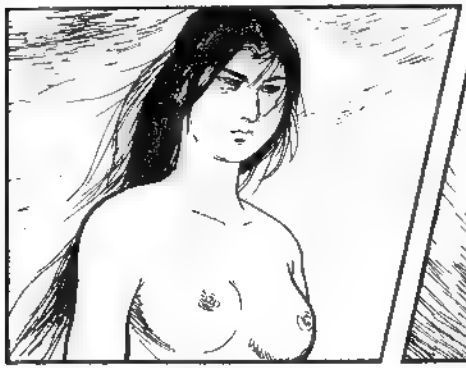
YE AIN'T IN NO HURRY, ARE YE? REST UP A TAD. WE AIN'T GOIN' FAR.
HOW 'BOUT YOU, O-SAMURAI?
GO SEE HOW TH' OCEAN WOMEN O' SODESHI WORK.
THEN YOU TELL THEM OTHER FOLK.
SODESHI WOMEN IS HARD WORKIN', GOOD WOMEN, WE IS.
WE GO T' THEIR BEACHES FER SEAWEED 'CAUSE WE GOTTA EAT.
TELL 'EM T' THINK HOW WE FEEL.
TELL 'EM... THE SODESHI WOMEN BE CRYIN' CUZ THEY CALL 'EM ROBBER BOATS.
GO ON...

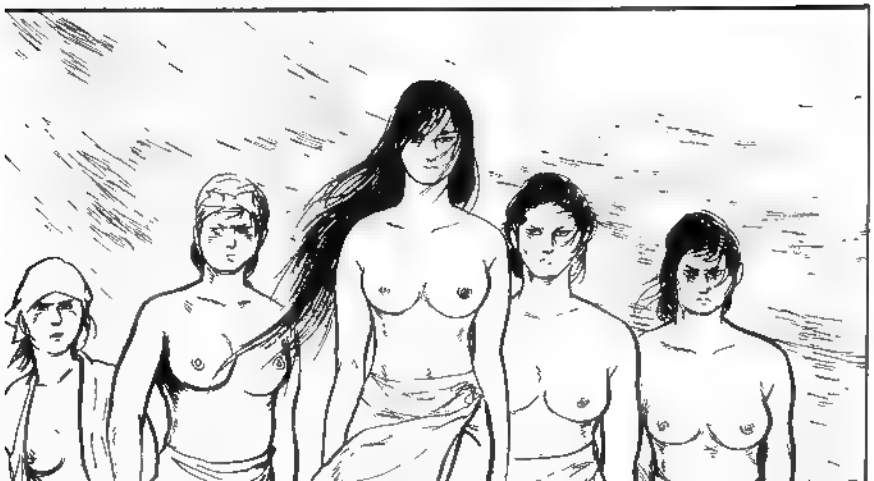












O-SAMURAI! WHY DID YOU COME HERE?!
YOU WEREN'T PASSING BY! SODESHI'S A LONG HIKE FROM ANYWHERE!
WHO ARE YOU! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
I KNEW IT! CURSE YOU, LONE WOLF AND CUB! TELL US WHY YOU HAVE COME!

YOU CANNOT FLEE THIS OCEAN HELL!
YOUR SUIŌ SCHOOL ZANBATŌ WON'T WORK AT SEA! YOU'RE UP AGAINST THE OCEAN WOMEN OF SODESHI!

SPEAK, ŌGAMI ITTŌ! WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?!
WHO ARE YOU HERE TO KILL?! WE'LL HEAR YOU OUT .. BEFORE WE SEND YOU TO HELL!

SO. IT'S TRUE
THIS IS THE HEARTLAND OF THE SHÖGUN'S SATOIRI-NINJA
H-HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
I'D HEARD IT WAS A FISHING VILLAGE IN TANGO, THAT WAS ALL
WE'VE SPENT DAYS SEARCHING THIS COAST
THEN WHY?!
WHAT FOR ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!

THE OCEAN WOMEN
OF SODESHI
LAUNCH THEIR BOATS
UPON ON THE SEA
UPON
THE
SEA
OUT ON
THE SWELL
TAKE THEIR
BOATS AROUND
THE CAPE.
TO UNKNOWN
COUNTRIES FAR
AWAY BR NG
THEIR BOATS
AGAINST
THE SHORE
THE VILLAGE
FOLK NEVER
KNOW...

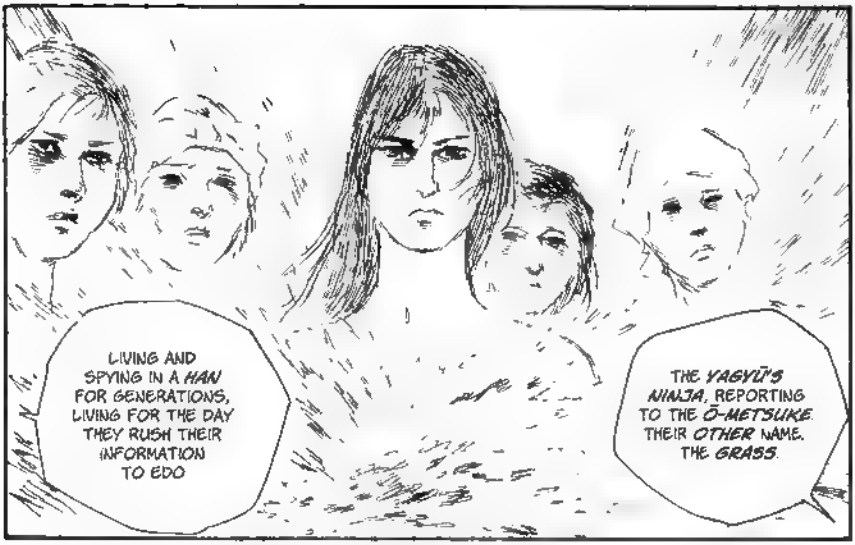
TAKING THE SEAWEED, NIGHT BY DAY..
THEN HOME ON THE FOAM
THE WOMEN GO
HOW- HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?!
YOU COULDN'T HAVE LEARNED IT ALL LAST NIGHT!
AND ONLY SODESHI FOLK SING IT! WHERE-?!
THE ROBBER BOATS OF TANGO THAT'S WHAT THE FAR FOLK SAY
ROW NO BOATS PAST INE, YOH!
RAISE NO SAILS PAST EJIRI, YOH!

POUR
NO SAKE
OFF SODESHI
YOH!
THE SODESHI WOMEN
DRINK THEIR OWN
SAKE OF SORROW

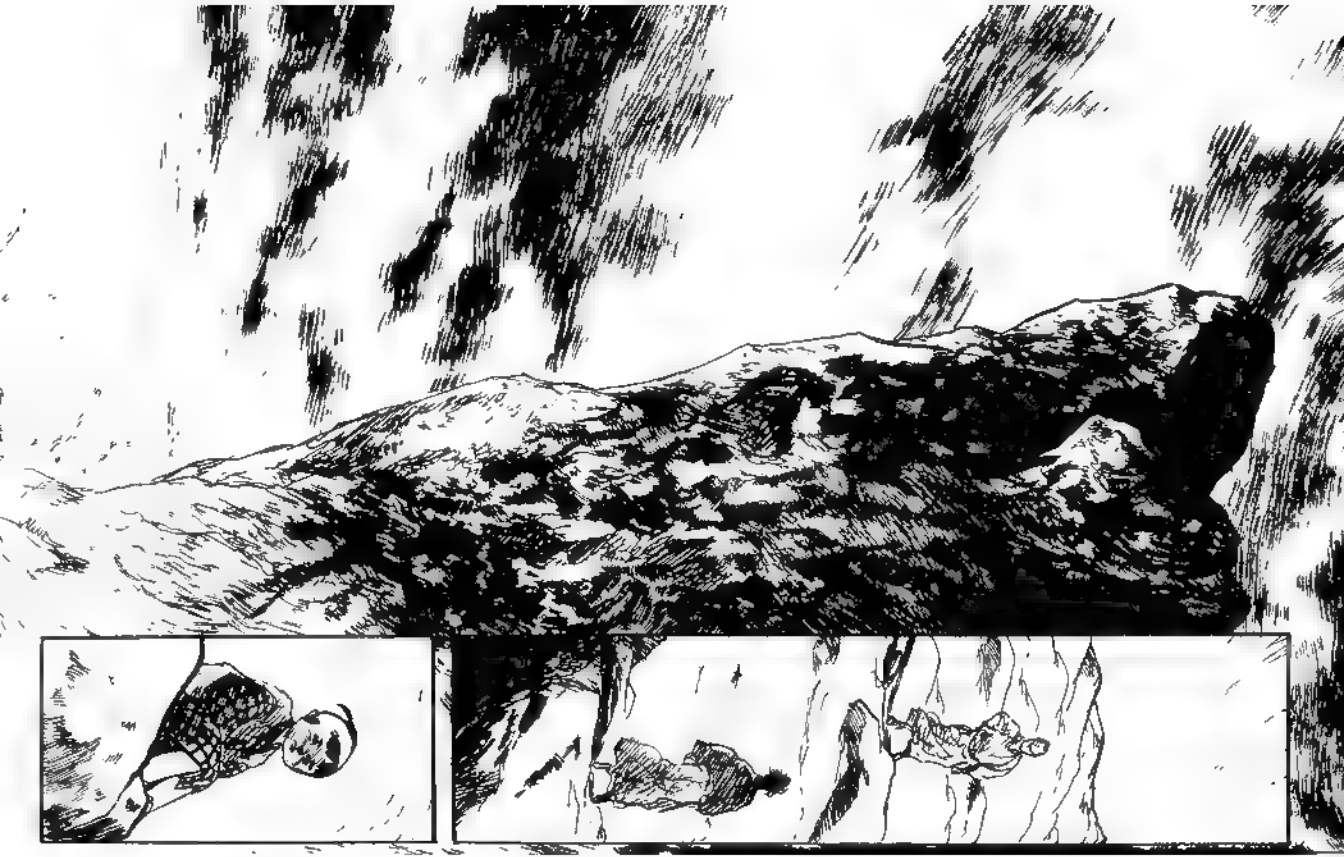
ALL
THEIR
OWN
HOW MANY YEARS SINCE I HEARD A MAN SING THET ?
I WAS JES' EIGHTEEN WHEN I LEFT MY HIKO.
SIXTEEN YEARS AGO.
THE OCEAN WOMEN OF SODESHI

SHED THEIR TEARS BENEATH THE SEA
HIDE THEIR TEARS BENEATH THE SEA
STOP IT! STOP!
SUCH A MOURNFUL SONG..
CAN THERE BE ANOTHER SONG ANYWHERE THAT HIDES SUCH SORROW?
ANSWER ME! WHERE DID YOU LEARN IT?
SIX MONTHS AGO
IN ETCHU, ON THE HOKURIKU BYWAY

THE CAPE AT OYASHI-RAZU
A CERTAIN MAN HAD HIRED ME. THEIR DARKEST SECRETS HAD BEEN DISCOVERED.
.BY A SATOIRI-NINJA THE MAN I PURSUED
THE SATOIRI-NINJA.


LIVING AND SPYING IN A *HAN* FOR GENERATIONS, LIVING FOR THE DAY THEY RUSH THEIR INFORMATION TO EDO
THE *YAGYŪ'S NINJA*, REPORTING TO THE *Ō-METSUKE*. THEIR *OTHER* NAME. THE *GRASS*.

YOUR FATHERS. *YOUR* HUSBANDS. *YOUR* SONS



ASSASSIN! LONE WOLF AND CUB!
AKIYAMA SHINNOSUKE!
WHSSSH
fwp
fwp

KREE
KREE
THPP

WHSSS
FWHTT
KTANGG

SKUSSH
UGKK!
FWOO

WHY DO YOU STAY ? I WON'T LAST ANOTHER HOUR.

UNTIL THEN.
I AM AN ASSASSIN.
VERY WELL, THEN.
YOU'LL *WATCH* ME DIE WITH YOUR OWN *EYES?!*
♪ YAHH RESSAH...! ♫
♪ THE OCEAN WOMEN OF *ORAGASA*... ♪

LAUNCH THEIR BOATS UPON THE SEA, YOH!
OUT ON THE SWELL.. AROUND THE CAPE, YOH!
TO UNKNOWN COUNTRIES FAR AWAY BRING THEIR BOATS AGAINST THE SHORE, YOH!
THE VILLAGE FOLK NEVER KNOW.
HARVESTING SEAWEED, NIGHT BY DAY, YOH!
HOME ON THE FOAM THE WOMEN GO, YOH!
THE ROBBER BOATS OF TANGO THAT'S WHAT THE FAR FOLK SAY
YAHHRENA!
YAHHRENA
YOH!

ROW NO BOATS PAST INE, YOH!
RAISE NO SAILS PAST EJIRI, YOH!
POUR NO SAKE OFF ORAGASA, YOH!
THE OCEAN WOMAN OF ORAGASA DRINK THEIR OWN.
SAKE OF SORROW
ALL THEIR OWN, YOH...

A SAD SONG.
MY HOMELAND'S SONG.
I THOUGHT A SATOIRI-NINJA'S HOMELAND WAS WHERE HE LIVES.
WRONG. WE GRASS TAKE ROOT WHERE WE LAND, LIKE SEEDS ON THE WIND
WE FIND WIVES, HAVE CHILDREN. BUT OUR HEARTS ARE N OUR HOMELAND, NEVER FORGOTTEN. NOT FOR ONE DAY
A LAND OF WOMEN.
GRAND-MOTHERS, MOTHERS, WIVES
WE LIVE WHERE WE LAND, MARRY, HAVE OUR CHILDREN...
BUT IF A GIRL CHILD IS BORN, SHE CAN'T INHERIT OUR MISSION WE SWITCH HER, WITH A BOY FROM HOME.
SECRET TO OUR SECOND WIVES..
WE TAKE AWAY OUR OWN CHILD, AND TELL HER SHE'S HAD A SON.
WE FEED HER AN HERBAL POTION, SO SHE'S BED-BOUND FOR TWO MONTHS, AND CAN'T RAISE THE CHILD HERSELF

THE OCEAN WOMEN BRING THE BOY FROM OUR HOMELAND
AND ONE BECOMES OUR *REAL* WIFE.
TO BEAR THE *NEXT* BOY CHILD
ON SOME SECRET BEACH, FOR *ONE* NIGHT ONLY
IF NO CHILD IS CONCEIVED, SHE COMES BACK AGAIN A YEAR LATER.
AND ONCE SHE'S WITH *CHILD* YOU NEVER MEET AGAIN, APART, TO THE DAY YOU DIE.

NO JOY FOR OUR WOMEN, OUR WIVES.
TRAGIC WOMEN, THEIR LIVES AN EMPTY SHELL.
HUSBANDS TAKEN. CHILDREN TAKEN. LONELY FOR LIFE.
ITTŌ! HEAR ME! IF YOU CHANCE UPON MY HOMELAND, STOP THE TIDE! NO MORE BOATS!
THE OCEAN WOMEN OF ORAGASA.
SHED THEIR TEARS BENEATH THE SEA.
WHERE IS YOUR HOME-LAND?
THAT, I CANNOT TELL YOU. ONLY IF BY CHANCE.
YOU PASS THERE. . . . .

BLAM
THOK

HIS NAME AKIYAMA SHINNOSUKE.
TO SEE HIS WIFE, ONE FINAL TIME. .
..THAT WAS HIS LAST DESIRE.
NNGN. .!
YOUR NAME?
O-SHIO.
WOULD YOU SLAY HIS KILLER?!
YES!
WITH ALL MY HEART!!

FWAP
SKSSH

FWOD
HE ASKED ME TO STOP THE TIDE.
"SHIO"... TIDE HE ASKED ME TO KILL YOU
A HUSBAND'S LAST WISH. TO SAVE HIS WIFE FROM SORROW.
AHH. MY LOVE.
AT YOUR SIDE. ....

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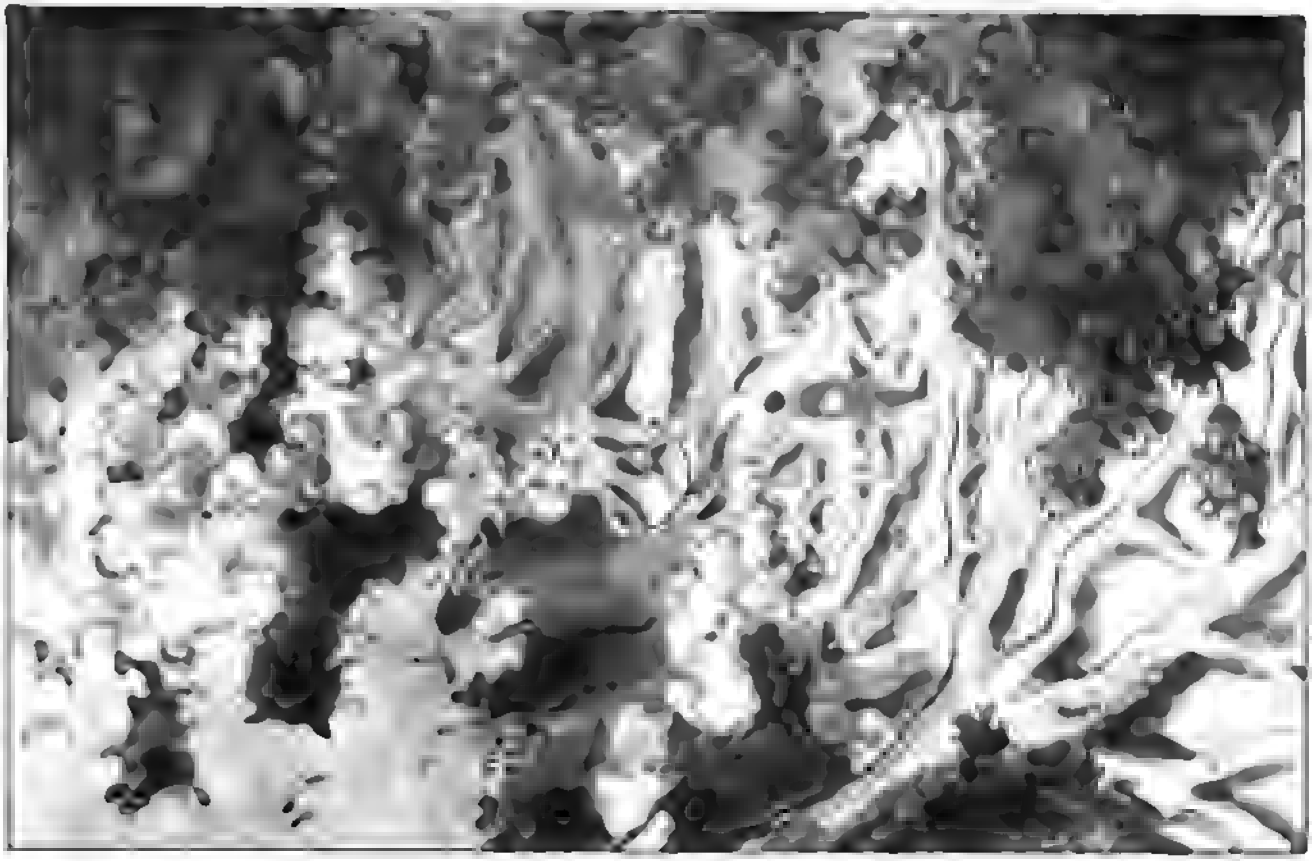
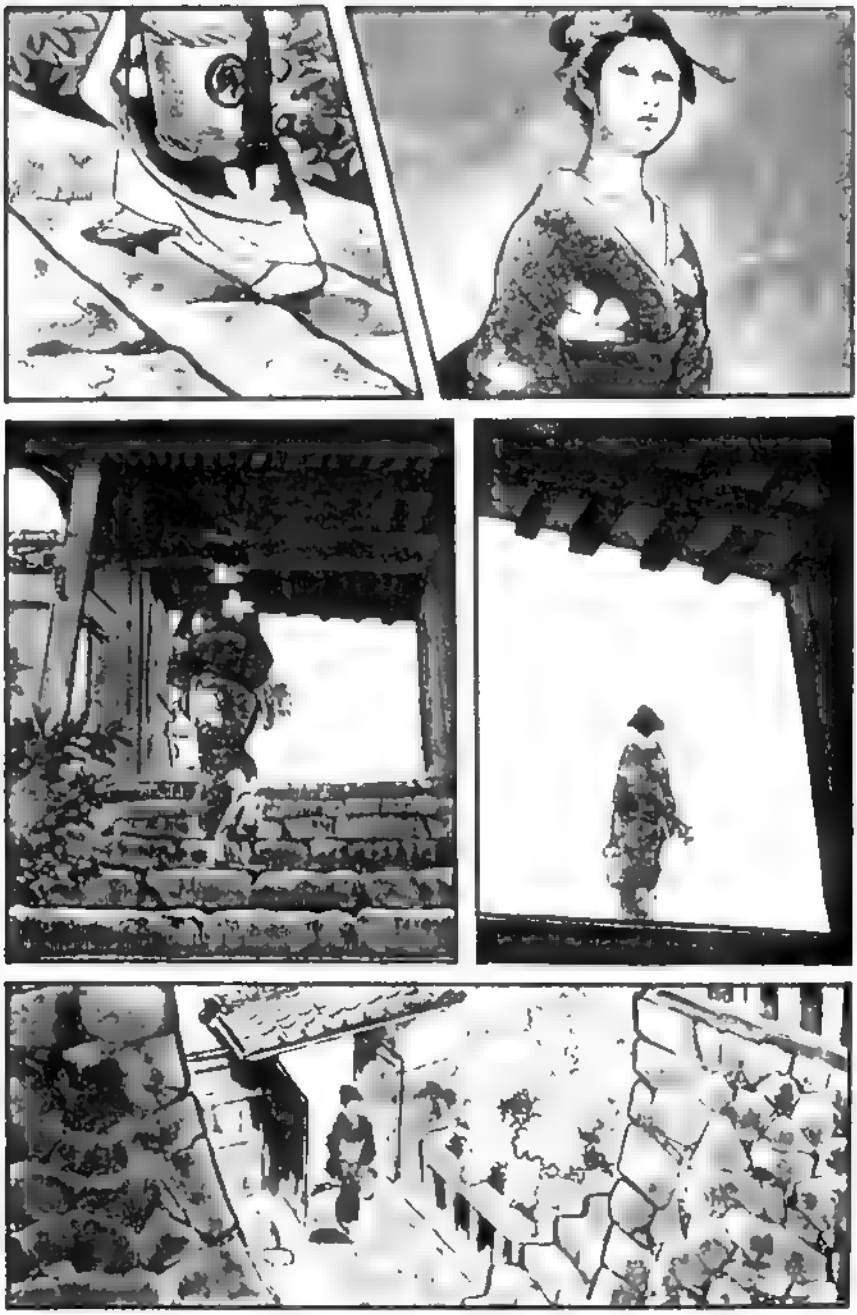
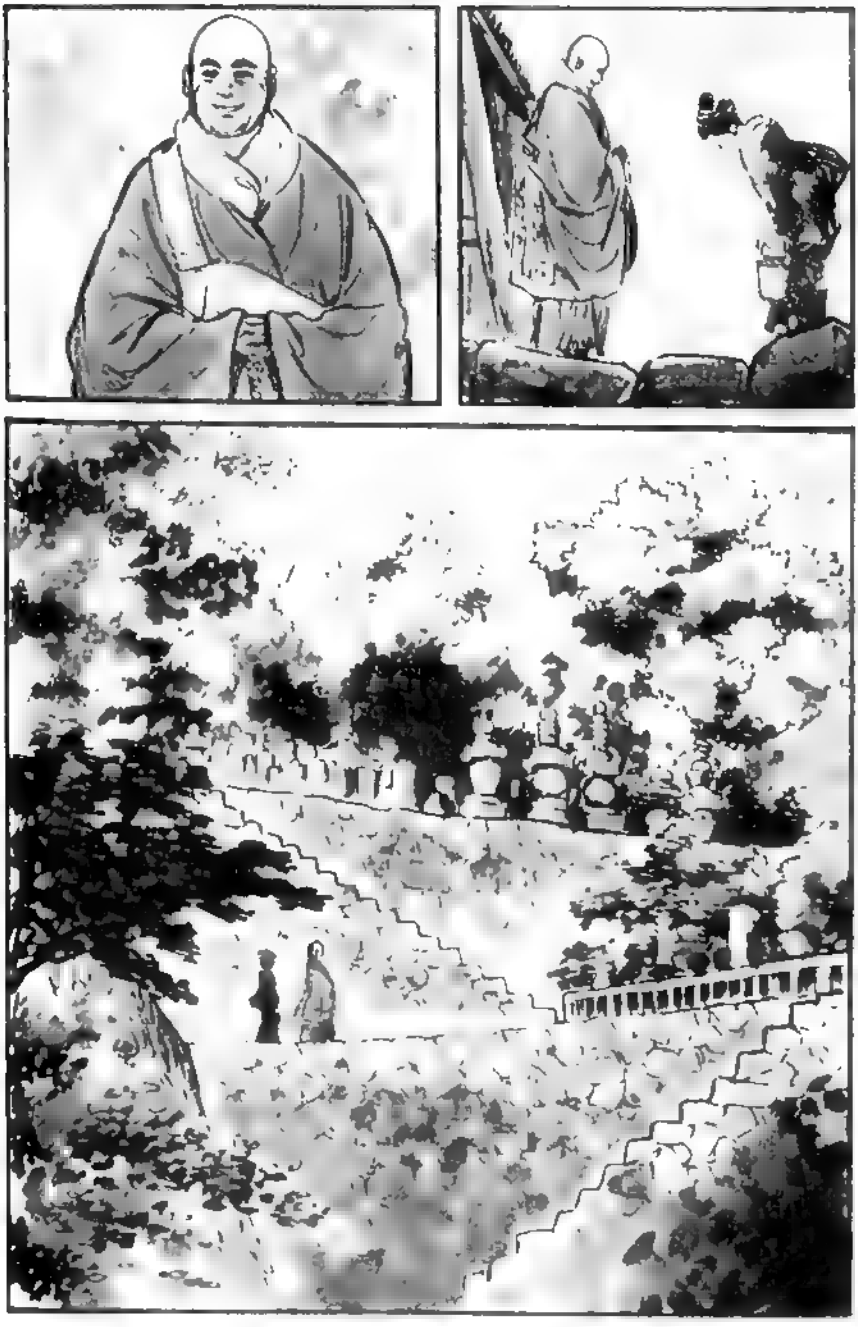
presents: Lone Wold and Cub

the seventy-fifth

Brothers of the Grass







DON'T BE SO COLD.
YOU KNOW HOW
THINK OF
ALONE SINCE
YOUR HUSBAND
IT'S SO HARD
TO BE A WIDOW.
SO LONELY IF

I'VE TALKED WITH THE OTHER PARISHIONERS AND THEY ALL SAY "YES YES IT'S A GOOD THING TO DO"
AHH
NO! NOT HERE...!
O-TSUNE-DONO!
DON'T WORRY MY DEAR I'VE PRAYED TO YOUR HUSBAND NIGHT AND DAY AND HE GIVES HIS BLESSINGS
OHH ....!
FROM THAT OTHER WORLD HE BEGS HE - "MAKE ... TSUNE HAPPY"

AHH. WAJÔ-SAMA.

AHH!

ARRANGE A GO-BETWEEN QUICKLY, MY DEAR.

AND CHOOSE A PROPITIOUS DAY FOR THE CEREMONY WILL YOU DO THAT, O-TSUNE-DONO?
Y-YES..

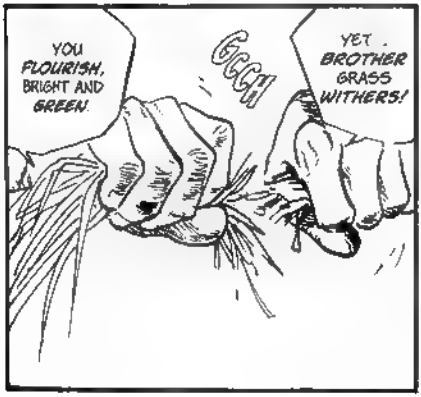
WE'LL SPEAK LATER, O-TSUNE-DONO
UNTIL THEN..

QUESTIONS!
A-
ANSWERS

BEFORE OUR EYES, YET NEVER SEEN
OUR EYE-LASHES!
CUT IT AND CUT IT YET IT CANNOT BE CUT
WATER!
COME NOT, YOU SAY THEY COME!
GO NOT, YOU SAY THEY GO!
LISTEN WELL.
SUN, MOON, LIGHT AND DARK.

BEFORE OUR EYES, YET NEVER SEEN...THIS IS THE DUTY OF THE GRASS.
A BOND YOU CUT AND CUT BUT CANNOT CUT--LIKE WATER ITSELF IS THE BOND BETWEEN YAGYŪ AND GRASS

YOU ARE SUN AND MOON, LIGHT AND DARK, YOU, AND YOUR BROTHER GETSUGYOKU.
PLANTED AS GRASS IN YOUR APPOINTED LANDS FOR TWENTY YEARS

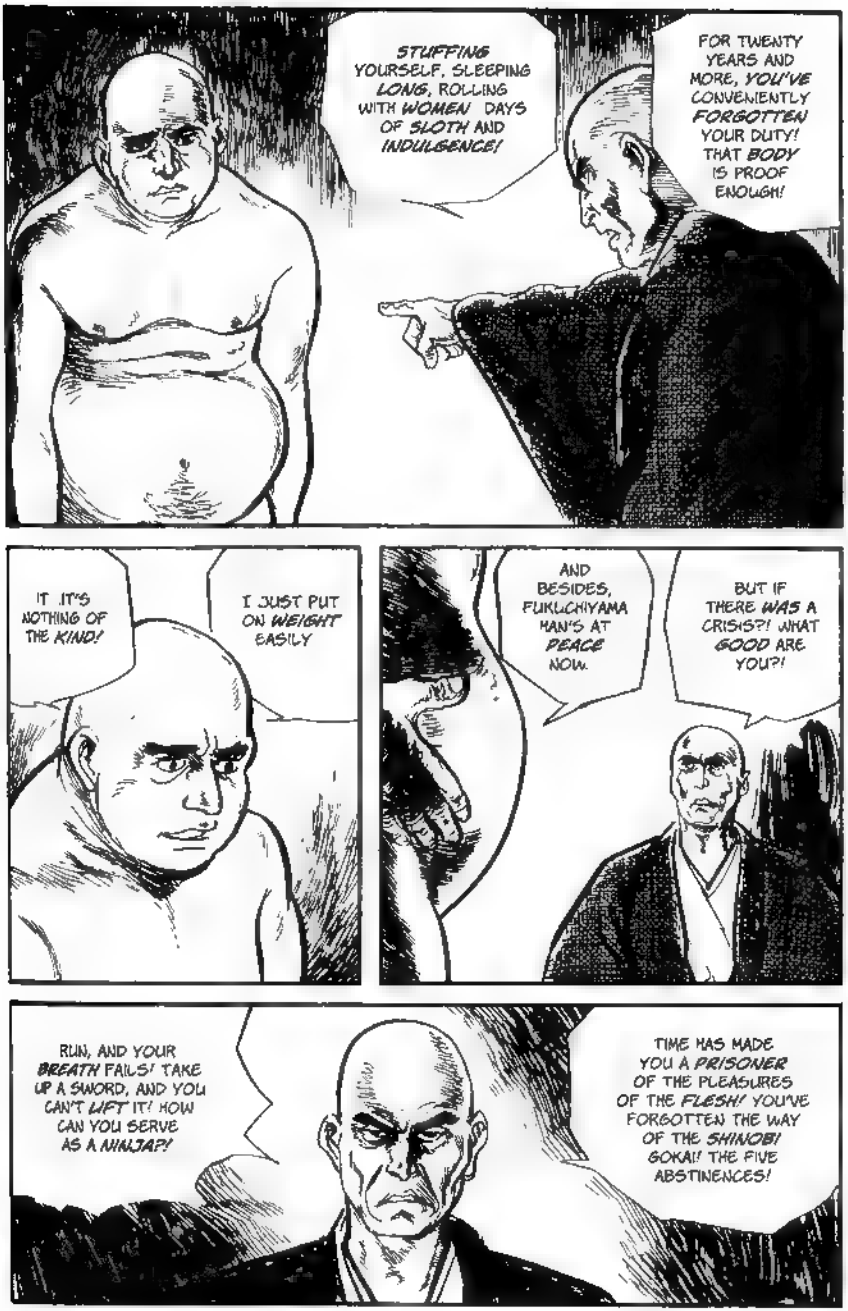

YOU FLOURISH, BRIGHT AND GREEN.
GCCH
YET BROTHER GRASS WITHERS!

IS. IS MY BROTHER HURT?!

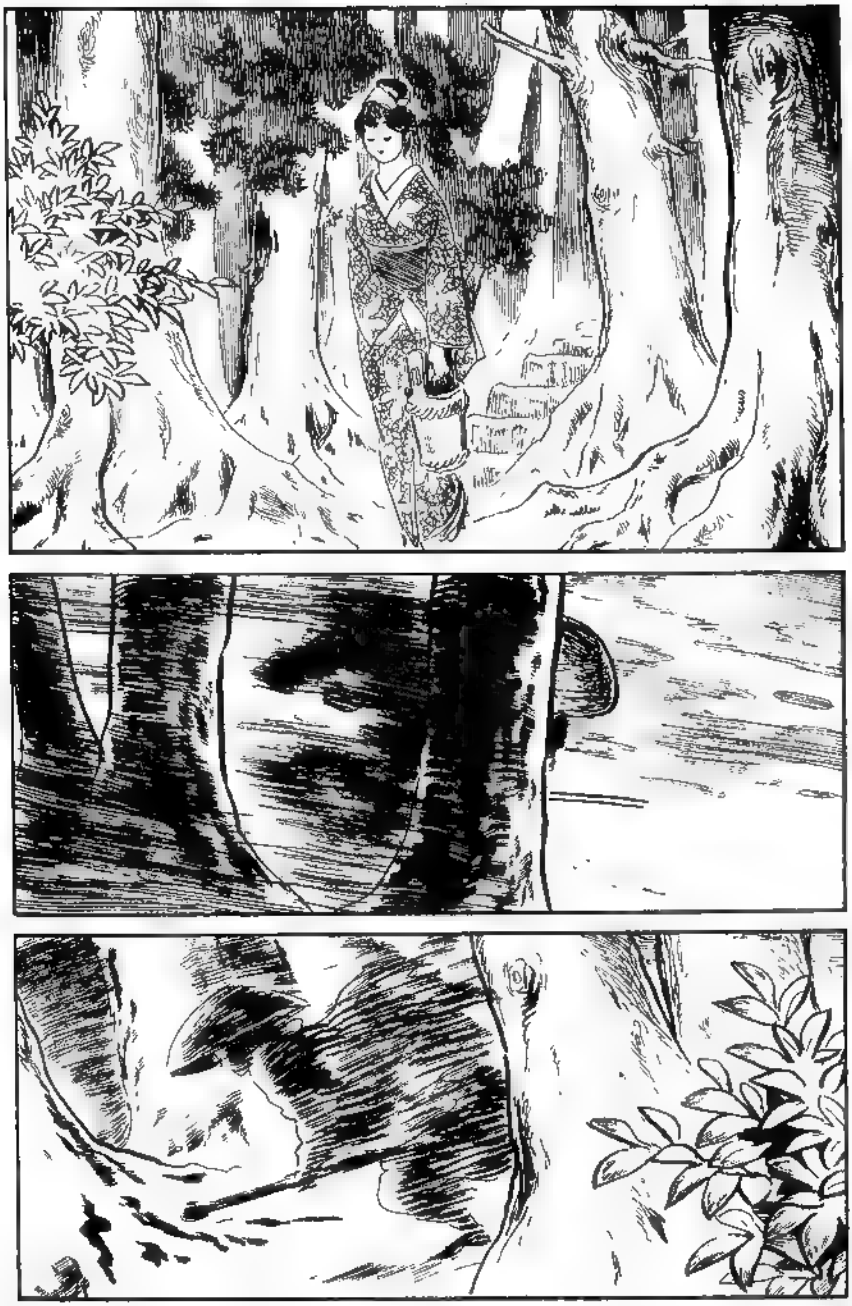
YOUR
BROTHER
GETSUGYOKU.

AFTER BECOMING HEAD PRIEST OF CHŌMYŌ TEMPLE IN TAKATŌ HAN.
HE FORGOT THE DUTIES OF THE GRASS! DRUNK ON LUST HE'S FLED WITH A WOMAN WE KNOW NOT WHERE
WHA--?!
WHERE IS HE, NICHIGYOKU?!
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?!
YES, WE'RE BROTHERS. BUT

THERE IS MUCH OF HIM IN YOU
W-WAIT! THAT WOMAN YOU SAW ME WITH. SHE'S A WIDOW! A PERFECT CANDIDATE FOR A WIFE!
AS GRASS, I NEED TO FIND A WIFE, SPREAD MY SEED, PASS ON MY DUTIES TO THE NEXT GENERATION.
THAT'S THE DEDICATION OF THE GRASS
I DECIDED THAT WOMAN WOULD—
NICHIGYOKU! STAND AND STRIP!
S-STRIP? YOU MEAN..?
YOU HEARD ME!
IS THAT BODY THE MARK OF YOUR DEDICATION, GRASS?!


STUFFING YOURSELF, SLEEPING LONG, ROLLING WITH WOMEN DAYS OF SLOTH AND INDULGENCE!
FOR TWENTY YEARS AND MORE, YOU'VE CONVENIENTLY FORGOTTEN YOUR DUTY! THAT BODY IS PROOF ENOUGH!
IT IT'S NOTHING OF THE KIND!
I JUST PUT ON WEIGHT EASILY
AND BESIDES, FUKUCHIYAMA HAN'S AT PEACE NOW.
BUT IF THERE WAS A CRISIS?! WHAT GOOD ARE YOU?!
RUN, AND YOUR BREATH FAILS! TAKE UP A SWORD, AND YOU CAN'T LIFT IT! HOW CAN YOU SERVE AS A NINJA?!
TIME HAS MADE YOU A PRISONER OF THE PLEASURES OF THE FLESH! YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE WAY OF THE SHINOBI! GOKAI! THE FIVE ABSTINENCES!

THE SHINOBI HIDES A DAGGER IN HIS HEART! YOU CALL YOURSELF GRASS?! A YAGYŪ NINJA?!
N-NOT TO CONTRADICT YOU, SIR, BUT ..
..I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DUTY OF THE GRASS IS TO FIT INTO THE COMMUNITY WHERE HE LIVES AND AROUSE NO SUSPICION, FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION NOT FIGHTING WITH SWORDS AND ALL!
AND I'VE DONE IT! EVERYONE TRUSTS ME, EVEN OUR LORD FAVORS ME!
THE SECRETS OF THE HAN FALL INTO MY LAP WITHOUT EVEN USING MY NINGI .SO WHICH WORKS BETTER? MY WAY OR CRAWLING UP CASTLE WALLS?
A SHINOBI DOESN'T MAKE EXCUSES! I'M TALKING ABOUT WHAT YOU DO WITH THOSE SECRETS!
HOW WILL YOU BRING THEM TO THE YAGYŪ WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN CLIMB OR RUN!
ENOUGH! GET DRESSED.



KYAHH!
FWOO

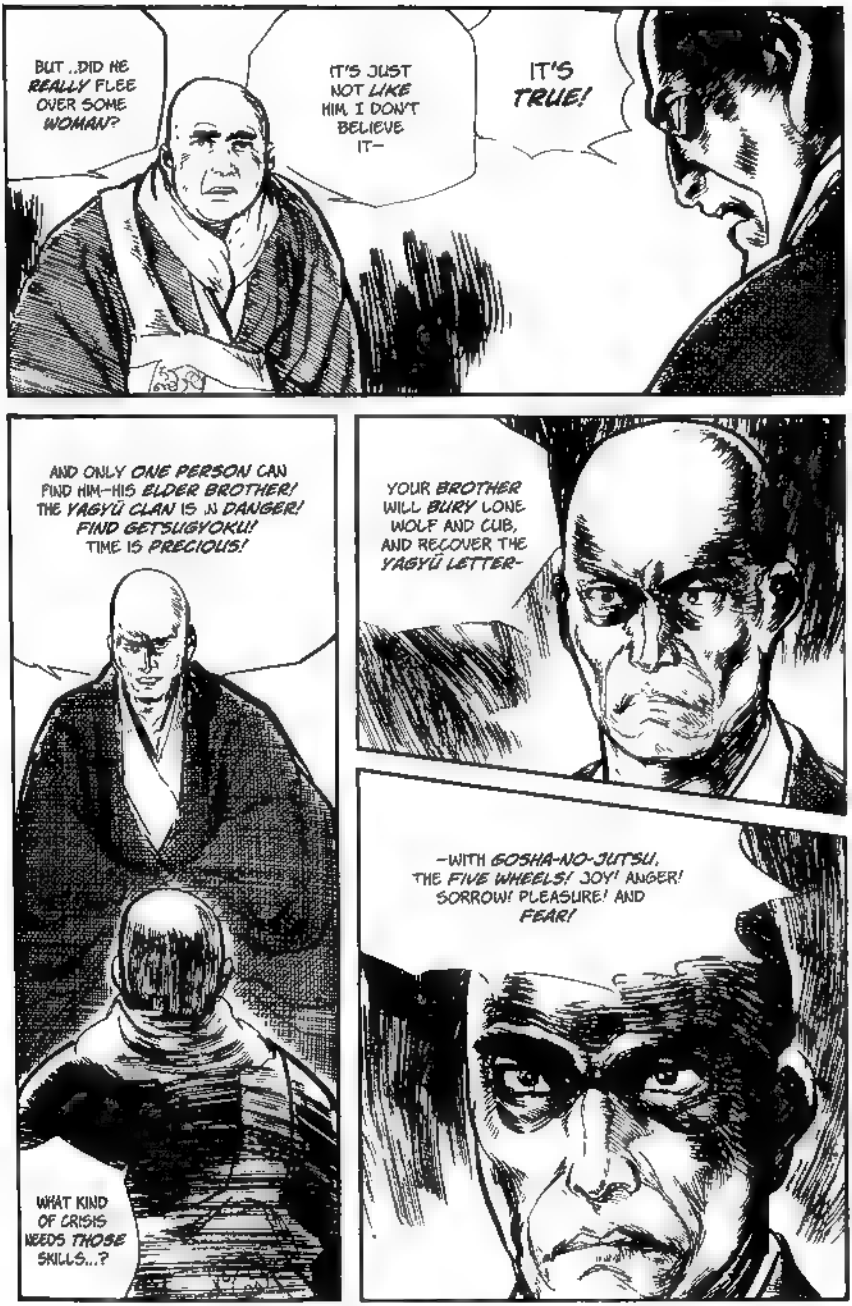
NICHIGYOKU, YOU ARE RELIEVED IMMEDIATELY OF YOUR DUTIES AS GRASS
W-WHAT?!
I GIVE YOU A NEW MISSION.
FIND YOUR BROTHER GETSUGYOKU HE DISAPPEARED WITH THAT WOMAN ON THE SEVENTH OF LAST MONTH. YOU HAVE THIRTY MORE DAYS TO FIND HIM.
B-BUT.. HOW?!
A CUNNING PRIEST LIKE YOU MUST HAVE SOME IDEAS
AND YOU SHARE YOUR BROTHER'S BLOOD FOLLOW YOUR HEART!
BUT.. BUT I'VE SWEATED TWENTY YEARS ESTABLISHING MYSELF HERE!

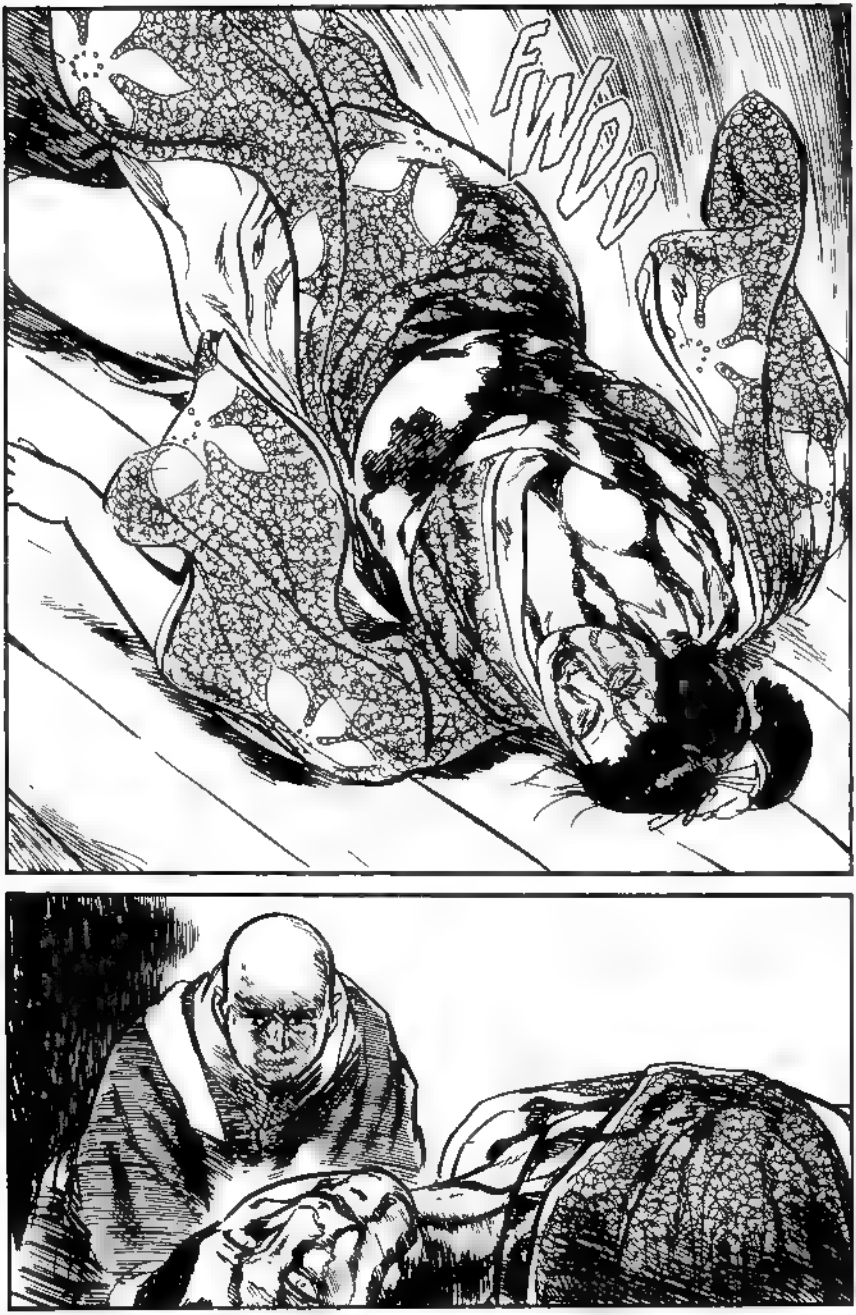
RATHER THAN CHASING SOME NUKENIN, DON'T YOU THINK I CAN SERVE THE YAGYŪ BETTER AS GRASS ?
HE'S DOOMED TO DIE ONCE YOU CATCH HIM. SO WHY WASTE ME AND MY POSITION?
WE ASK BECAUSE ONLY YOU CAN FIND HIM.
BUT IF I JUST LIE AND DISAPPEAR FOR A MONTH, THE HAN AND THE LORD HIMSELF WILL BE SUSPICIOUS.
NICHIGYOKU . YOU SEEM QUITE ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE HERE.
YOUR LEISURELY EXISTENCE OF WINE, FOOD, WOMEN, AND POWER.
TH-THAT'S NOT WHAT I-
BUT YOU CAN ONLY ENJOY IT WHILE YOU'RE ALIVE!

DON'T TELL ME YOU REFUSE RETSUDŌ-SAMA'S ORDERS.?
N-NO! NEVER!
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT LEAVING.

AHH?!
O-TSUNE ..!!

YOU BECAME *INFATUATED*. SHE TURNED YOU DOWN. YOU *MURDERED* HER IN YOUR RAGE, AND FLED. SUCH A *SCANDAL!* THE *HEAD PRIEST* OF THE LORD'S FAMILY TEMPLE. THEY'LL COVER IT UP *COMPLETELY*
WH. WHY WOULD YOU *DO* THIS?!
JUST TO CATCH A *ASSASSIN?*
WE *NEED* GETSUGYOKU!
NO OTHER *NINJA* OF THE *YAGYŪ* CAN MATCH HIS COMMAND OF THE *FIVE WHEELS*. HE'S NEEDED, *NOW!*


BUT ..DID HE REALLY FLEE OVER SOME WOMAN?
IT'S JUST NOT LIKE HIM. I DON'T BELIEVE IT—
IT'S TRUE!
AND ONLY ONE PERSON CAN FIND HIM—HIS ELDER BROTHER! THE YAGYŪ CLAN IS IN DANGER! FIND GETSUGYOKU! TIME IS PRECIOUS!
WHAT KIND OF CRISIS NEEDS THOSE SKILLS...?
YOUR BROTHER WILL BURY LONE WOLF AND CUB, AND RECOVER THE YAGYŪ LETTER—
—WITH GOSHA-NO-JUTSU, THE FIVE WHEELS! JOY! ANGER! SORROW! PLEASURE! AND FEAR!

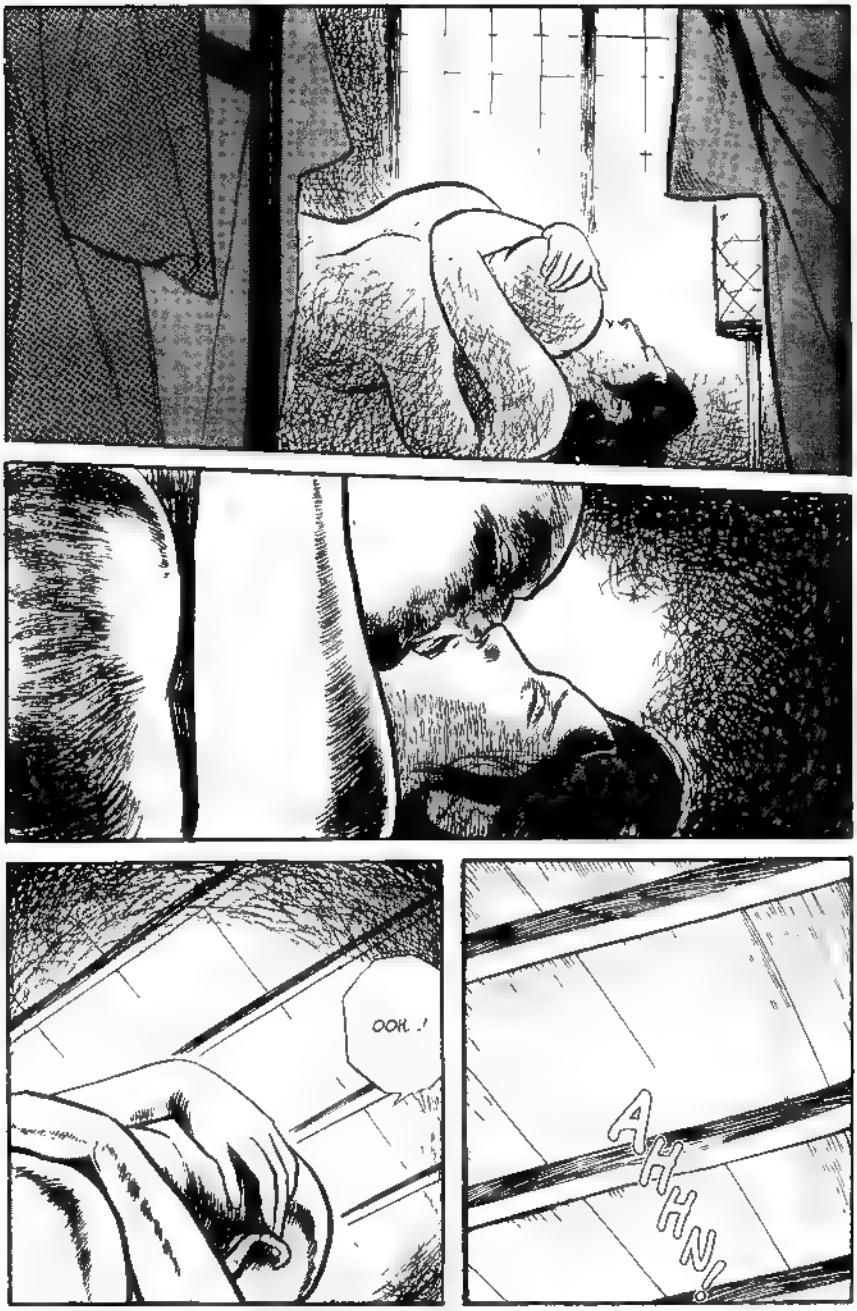

FWOO

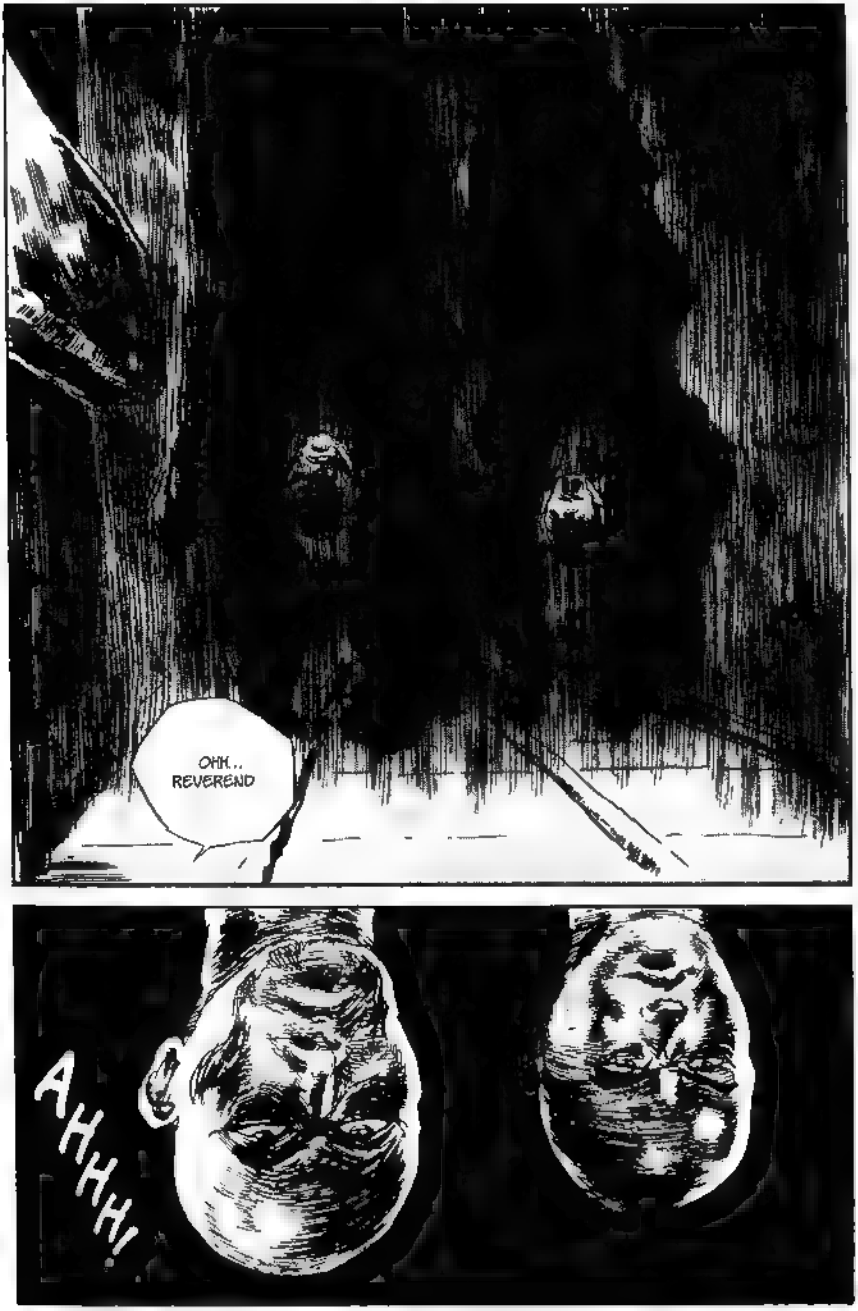
YOU DID THIS TO ME, BROTHER! YOU IDIOT!
WHERE IN THE SIXTY STATES OF JAPAN HAVE YOU GONE TO HIDE FROM THE YAGYŪ?
YOU STUPID FOOL!
ARE YOU CRAZY?
FOOLING AROUND WITH WOMEN!
FOR-GETTING YOU'RE GRASS..

OF COURSE THEY'LL TURN EVERY LEAF TO FIND YOU!
AND WHEN THEY DO.. CHOP!
GLP GLP GLP
AH-AH I'M SO EXHAUSTED THAT IDIOT!
MMM
WHY DIDN'T YOU USE YOUR HEAD, LIKE ME? IF YOU LOVED HER, MARRY HER! YOU COULD'VE LIVED TOGETHER. FUN AND GAMES EVERY NIGHT. SIGH
MMM MMM
THAT'S HOW TO BE GRASS, DARN IT!
DRINK GOOD SAKE, FIND A GOOD WOMAN. NIRVANA!
YOU DROVE YOUR OWN BROTHER OUT OF PARADISE!
YOU FOOL!

YOU SHOULD HAVE FOLLOWED MY EXAMPLE!
THE WORLD'S AT PEACE. NO ONE'S GOING TO ASK THE GRASS FOR ANYTHING
LIVE LARGE, THEN GO TO HEAVEN. AND YOU HAD TO RUIN IT FOR BOTH OF US!
URRP!
MAKING ME HUNGRY. WEARING ME OUT.
YOU DAMN FOOL!

AHH... O-TSUNE...
MY POOR O-TSUNE.
HA HA HA!
tee hee!
ARE YOU WORSHIPPING ME, MISTER PRIEST?
THEN COME AND PRAY AT MY ALTAR WITH BOTH HANDS..
HA HA HA!


OOH..!
AHHN!


OHH.. REVEREND
AHHH!

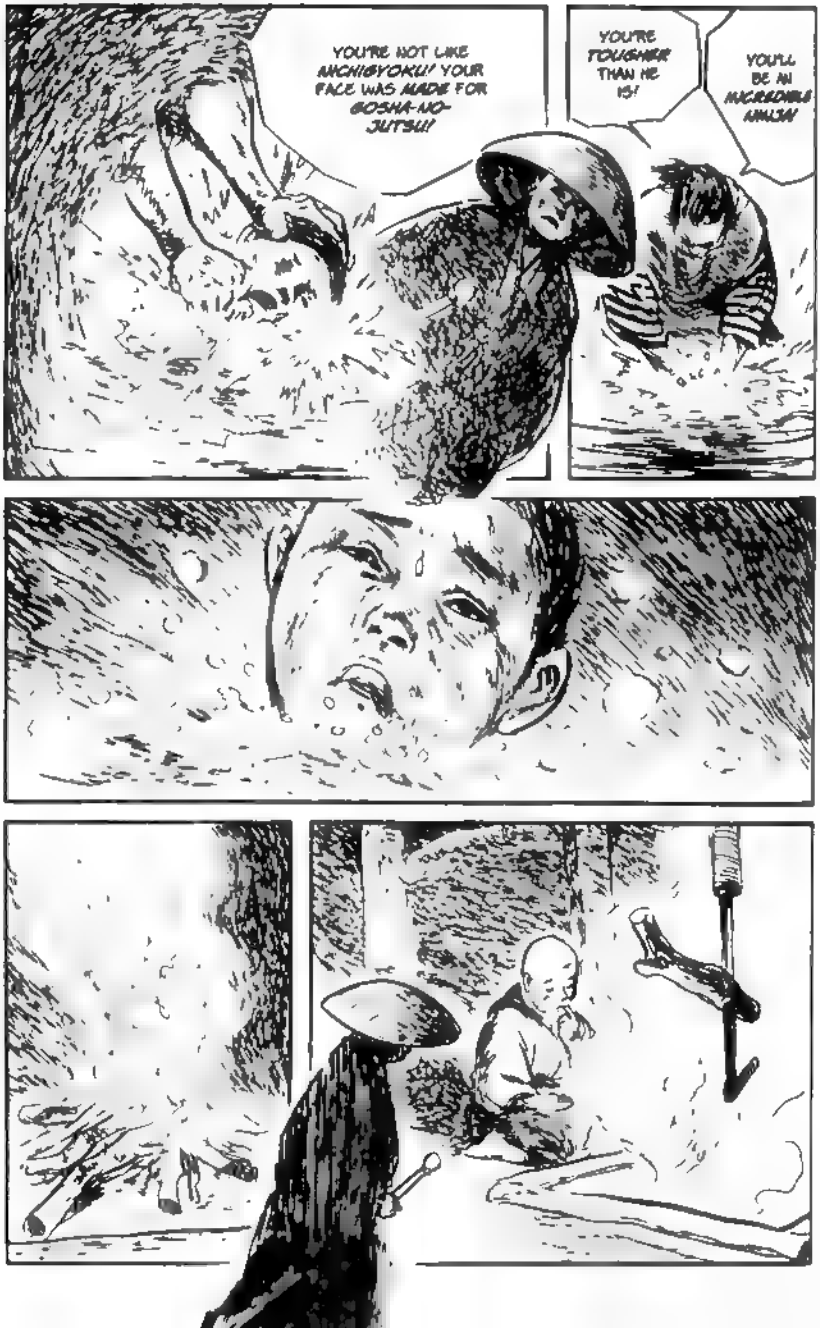
THIS MAKES IT TWENTY DAYS?
FROM SHINSHŪ TO TAKATŌ TO SUZAKA. UP TO UENO, DOWN TO SHIMOTSUKE.
I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE THAT IDIOT MIGHT HAVE GONE, BUT...
NOT A TRACE!

WHERE'D MY DAMN BROTHER GO?!
AHH. I'M SO HUNGRY...
CAN'T WALK ANOTHER STEP

AH!! KANNON'S WOMB!
THAT'S IT!
WHEN THINGS GOT *REALLY* BAD *THAT'S* WHERE HE'D GO!

WAHH!
:blp:

GASP!
BLUBB
YAAH ! I-CAN'T BREATHE
ENDURE IT!
ENDURE, BETSUGYOKU! YOU'LL NEVER MASTER THE FIVE WHEELS IF YOU CAN'T ENDURE!
BLSSH


YOU'RE NOT LIKE ANCHIBYOKU! YOUR FACE WAS MADE FOR GOSHA-NO-JUTSU!
YOU'RE TOUGHER THAN HE IS!
YOU'LL BE AN INCREDIBLE NINJA!

AH, KING!
NO FEAR!
LOOK STRAIGHT AT THE FLAMES!
DON'T BLINK!!

YOU, FOOL! WHAT IDIOT CLOSES HIS EYES?!
WHATEVER YOU SEE, NO SURPRISE! NO EXPRESSION! WE'RE DOING THIS UNTIL YOUR FACE IS AS STILL AS A NOH MASK!
THAT'S A SHINOBI! A SHINOBI WHO WIELDS THE FIVE WHEELS!
A MAN WEARS HIS HEART ON HIS FACE! IN HIS EXPRESSIONS! EXPRESSING EMOTION!
A SHINOBI NEVER SHOWS HIS HEART!
NOT JOY! NOT ANGER! SORROW, PLEASURE, FEAR! NOTHING!
WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR TRAINING, YOU'LL BE A MASTER OF THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE YAGYŪ GRASS! THE WHEELS OF JOY AND ANGER, SORROW AND FEAR! IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND!
UNDERSTAND, GETSUGYOKU?! YOU CAN BE A MASTER! YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES. YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR HOPELESS BLOB OF A BROTHER
SO ENDURE!
IN PERFECT PRACTICE!

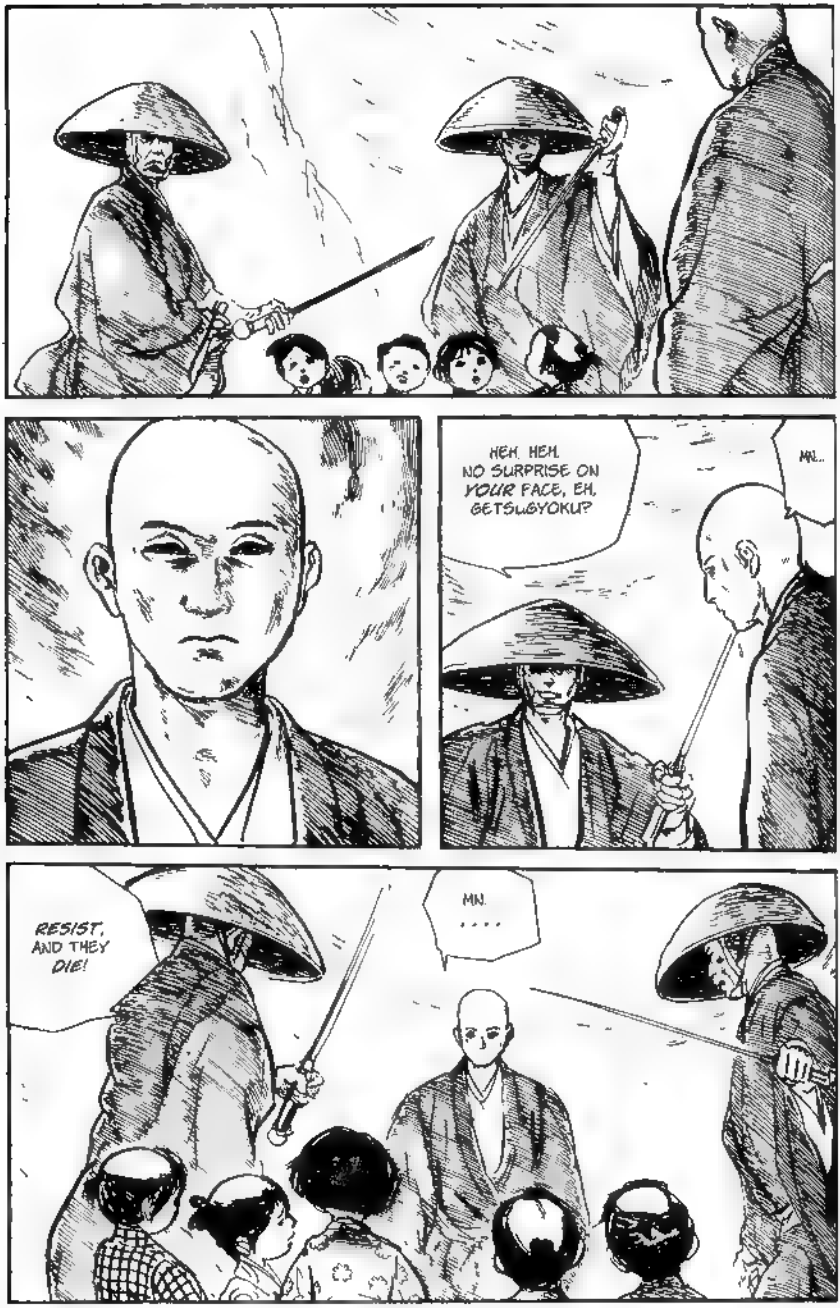
GETSUGYOKU,
IF YOU SO MUCH AS
TWITCH A MUSCLE,
THE DRIED MUD WILL
CRUMBLE
IF IT
CRUMBLES
NO FOOD!
WAH!
SHAK
KRAK

DAMN THAT GET SUGYOKU!
WHERE'S HE HIDING?!
NICHI-GYOKU! GO FIND YOUR BROTHER!

HERE. FOR YOU.
MMGH!
YOU COME HERE EVERY TIME YOU RUN AWAY, DON'TCHA?
BUT YOU DON'T LOOK SAD. NOT EVEN HUNGRY
GUESS IT MUST BE DAD'S TRAINING, HUH?

AH?!

WH-WHO ARE THOSE KIDS ?
NOT HIS OWN CHILDREN ?!
GOOD WORK MOMOGYORU
YOU'RE BROTHERS AFTER ALL
N NO WAY


HEH. HEH.
NO SURPRISE ON
YOUR FACE, EH,
GETSUGYOKU?
MN...
RESIST,
AND THEY
DIE!
MN.
. . . .

WHY GETSUGYOKU?! WHY DID YOU RUN?
AND I THOUGHT YOU FLED WITH A WOMAN? WHO ARE THESE BRATS?!
I BROUGHT HER HERE TO LOOK AFTER THE CHILDREN.
WHERE IS SHE?!
SHE FELL ILL AND DIED.
AND THE CHILDREN ?
THEY'RE ORPHANS I CARED FOR THEM AT THE TEMPLE IN TAKATŌ
I WANTED MY FACE BACK. MY HUMAN FACE

A FACE THAT CRIES WHEN I'M SAD, LAUGHS WHEN I'M HAPPY AND THEN, WHEN I'M ANGRY . . . .
I WANTED THE FACE OF MY CHILDHOOD, ONE MORE TIME BEFORE I DIED.
I LIKE LIVING WITH THESE CHILDREN.
THEY SOOTHE MY HEART AND LITTLE BY LITTLE, MY FACE HAS BEGUN TO REGISTER JOY AGAIN. ANGER, SORROW, PLEASURE. .
AS LONG AS I WAS GRASS, I HAD TO CLUTCH A DAGGER IN MY HEART I COULD NEVER RECLAIM MY FACE.
THAT'S WHY I FLED, TO A PLACE WHERE I COULD LIVE WITH CHILDREN.
WHAT FOOLISHNESS!

GETSUGYOKU! THIS IS A CRISIS! A CRISIS FOR THE YAGYŪ CLAN! WE'LL FORGET YOU TURNED NUKENIN
IF YOU USE THE FIVE WHEELS TO KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ, LONE WOLF AND CUB, AND BRING BACK THE YAGYŪ LETTER!
NO I'D RATHER DIE.
AND IF THE CHILDREN DIE FIRST ?!
MM. . . . .
RETSUDŌ-SAMA COMMANDS YOU!
THE CHILDREN WILL STAY WITH US UNTIL YOU COMPLETE YOUR MISSION!
NOW GO, GETSUGYOKU!
KILL ITTŌ! WITH THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE GRASS!

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presents: Lone Wold and Cub

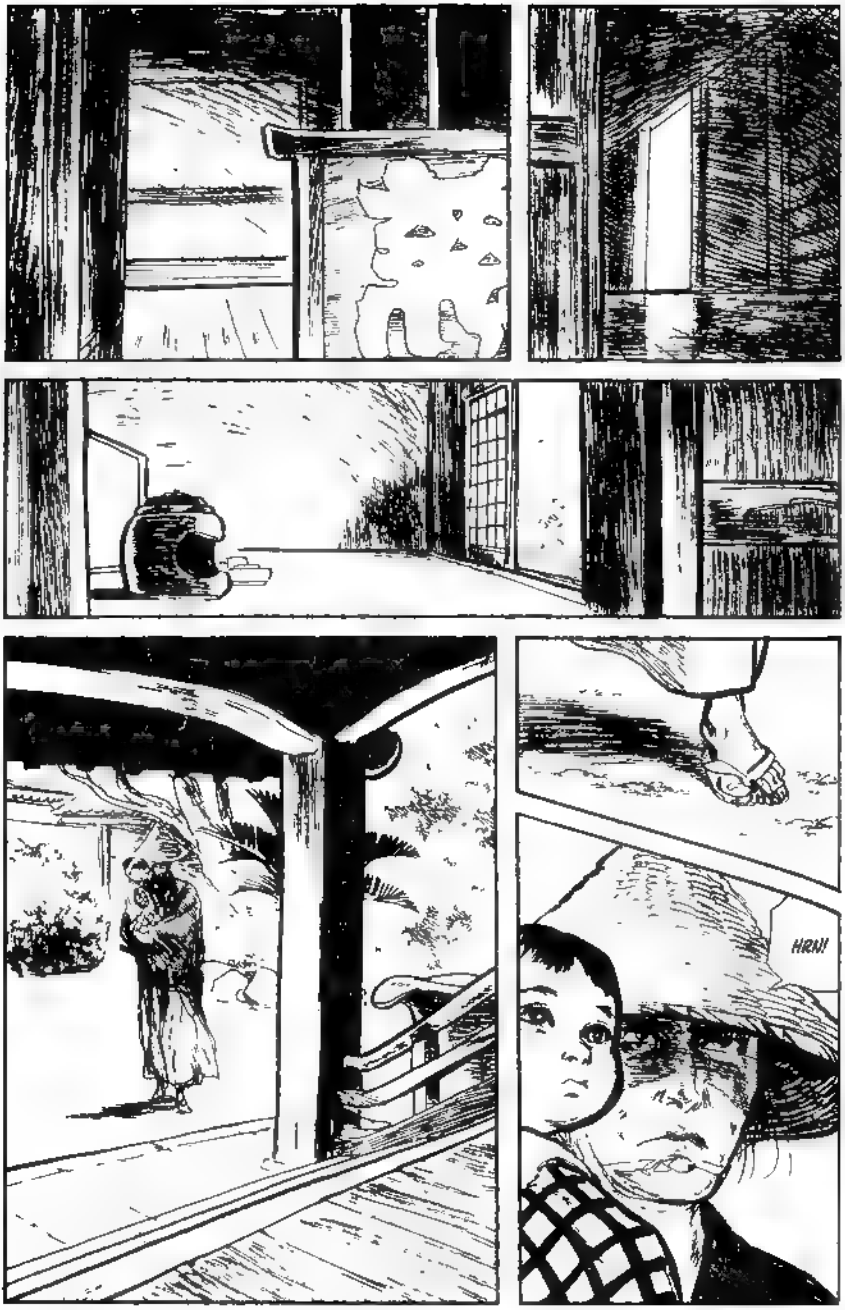
the seventy-sixth

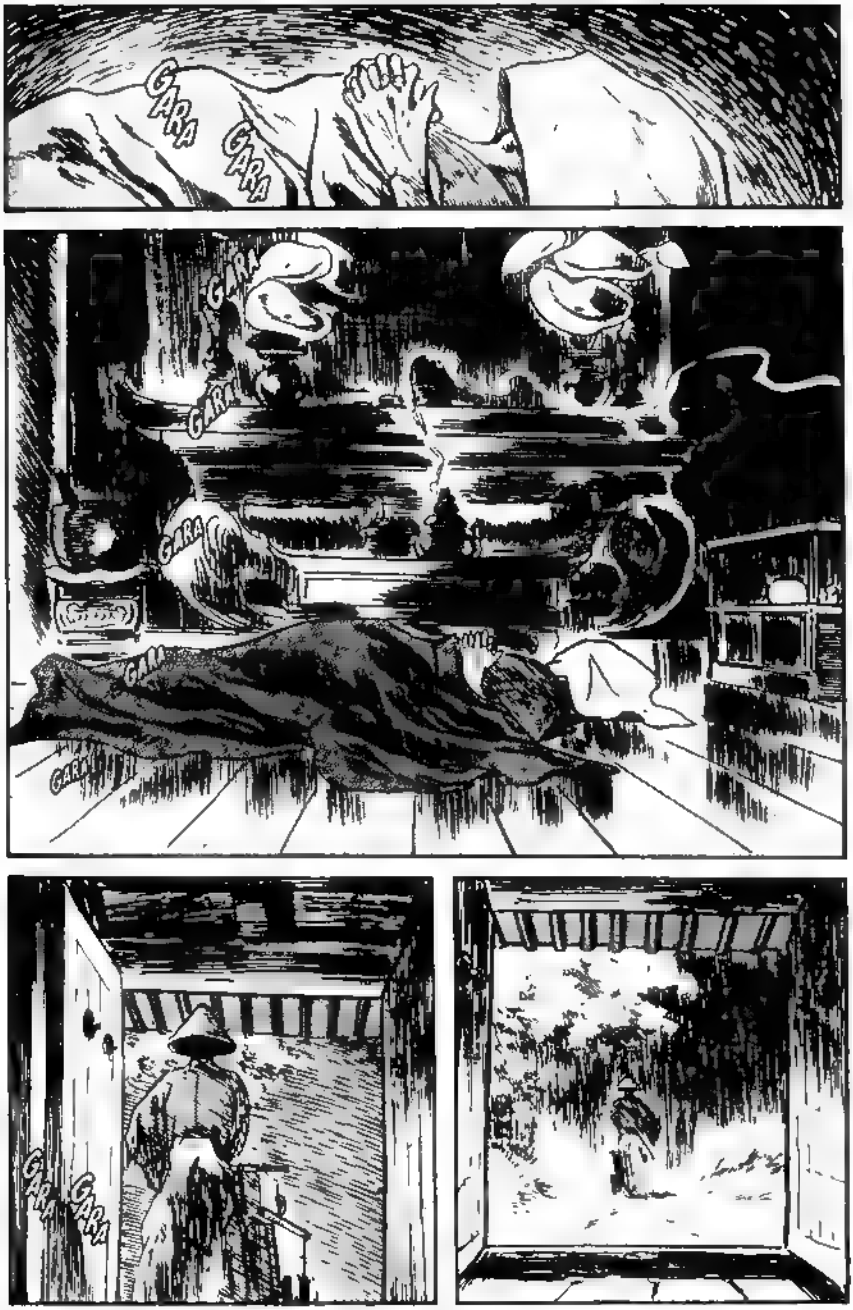
Five Wheels of the Yagyū

BUT FIRST I MUST BURY A CERTAIN MAN, THOUGH I NEED BORROW BUDDHA'S STRENGTH TO KILL HIM. I
IF I DON'T, TOO MANY OF MY FRIENDS WILL DIE.

WHEN I STEAL YOUR
THE POWER OF BUDDHA
CHILDHOOD TO SHOW
NEITHER JOY NOR ANGER,
CONDEMNED TO
WITH GRIEF, I WEAR
THE FACE OF A MAN
AND NOW,
MY REAL FACE
T TO YOU AND BEG
FORGIVENESS I

PARDON. I TRAVELERS SEEKING SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT


HRN!


GARA
GARA
GARA
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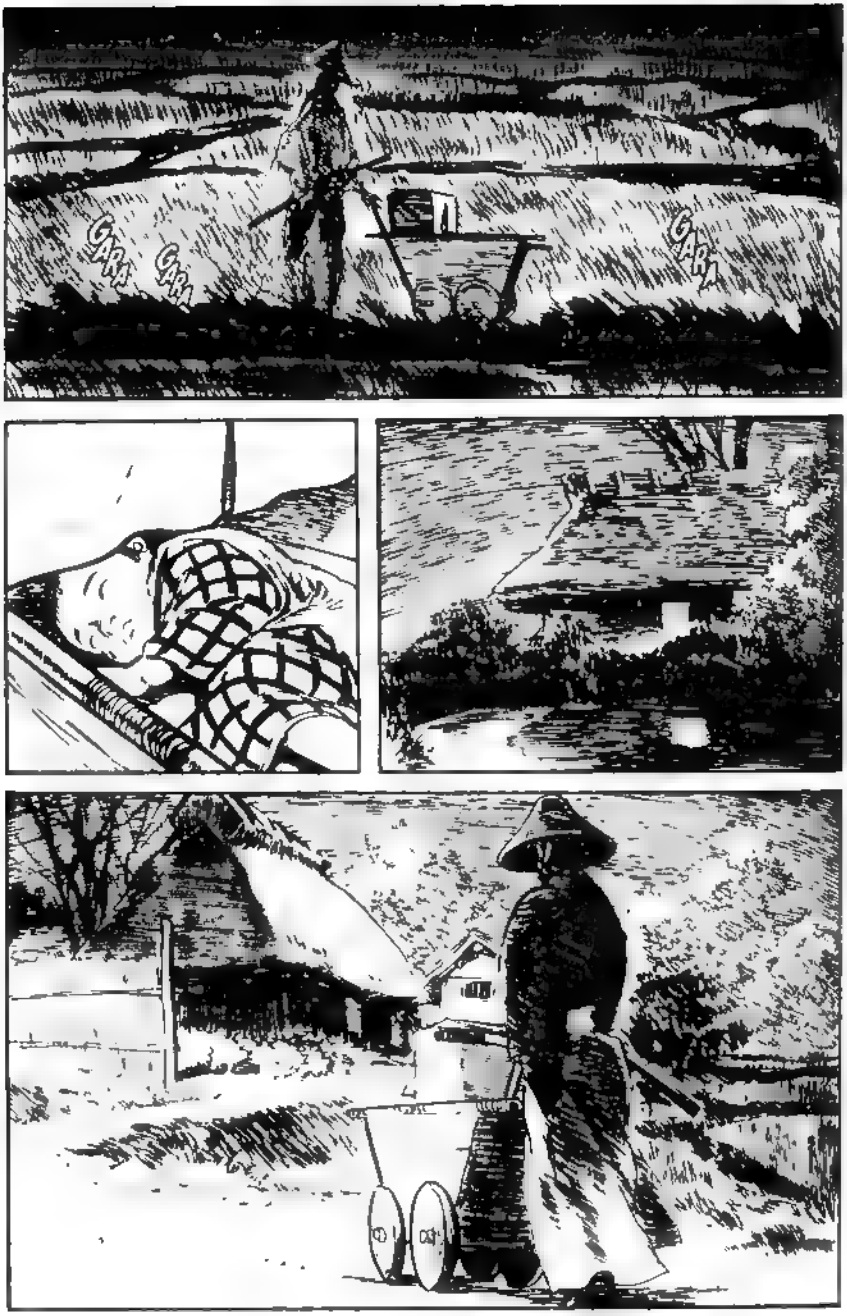
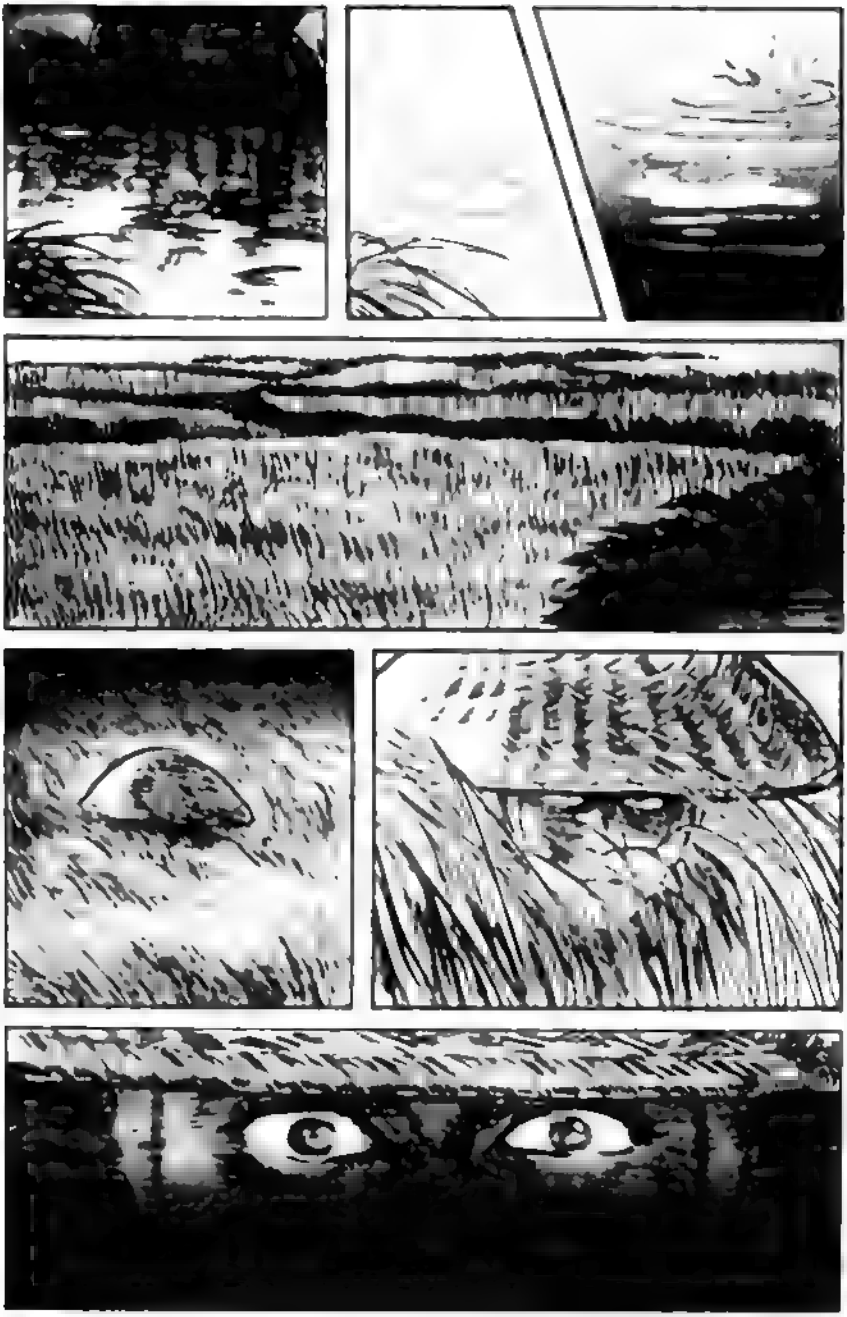
GARA

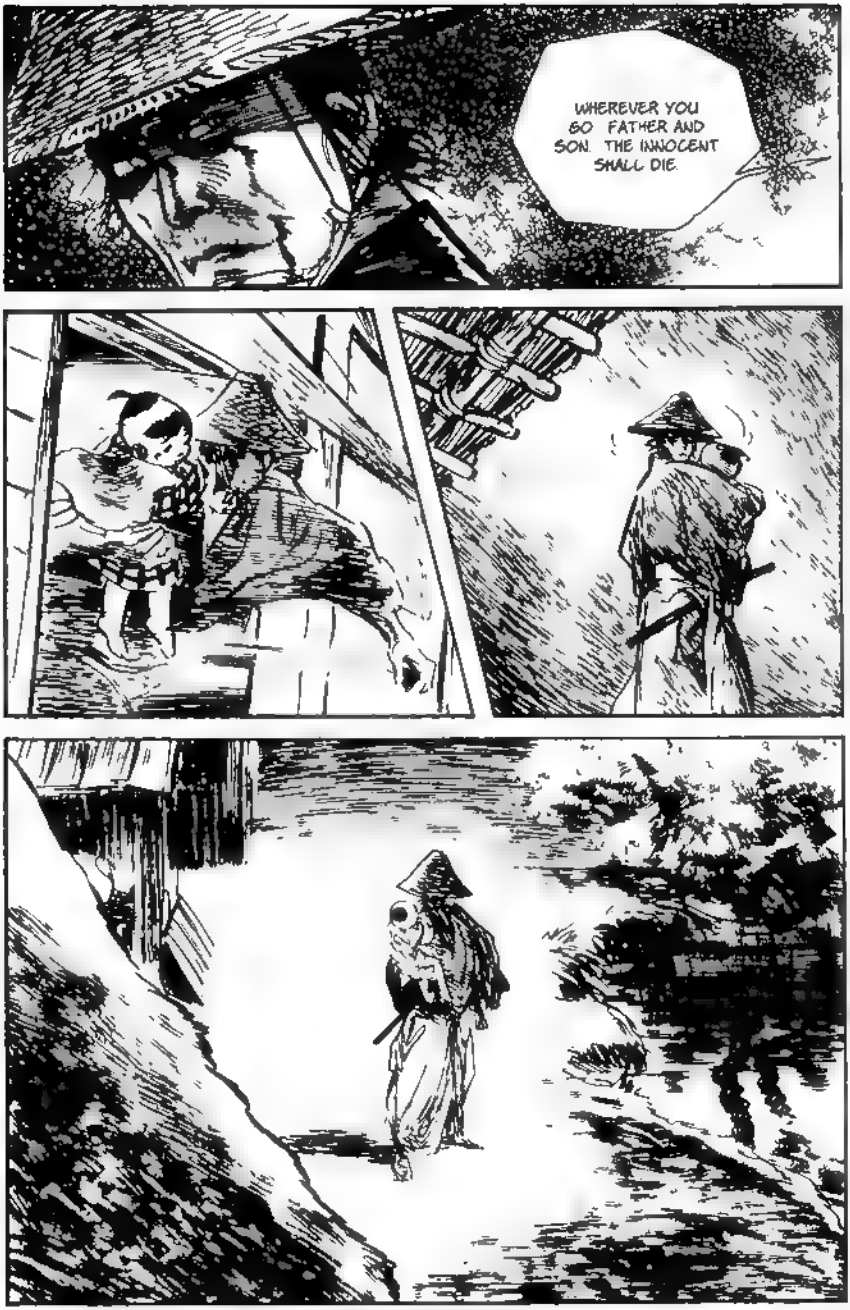
KEEEEE!

KEEEE!


GAH
GAH
GAH



PARDON!
FORGIVE THIS LATE HOUR, BUT MIGHT YOU SHARE A SMALL MORSEL.
HRNN! THE SMELL OF BLOOD. ?
KSHAKK


WHEREVER YOU GO FATHER AND SON. THE INNOCENT SHALL DIE.

WHEREVER YOU, FATHER AND SON, SEEK SHELTER, BEG FOR FOOD, RECEIVE ANY AND ALL THINGS
FOR NOTHING MORE THAN REACHING OUT TO YOU, THOSE WHO HELP YOU SHALL DIE
WHO ARE YOU?!
YAGYU?!
WHEREVER YOU GO, FATHER AND SON YOU SHALL SUMMON BLOOD AND SLAUGHTER. THE WINDS OF CARNAGE SHALL BLOW.
AH, THE SORROW.
TRULY, YOU ARE THE GODS OF DEATH.
SHOW YOURSELF!!

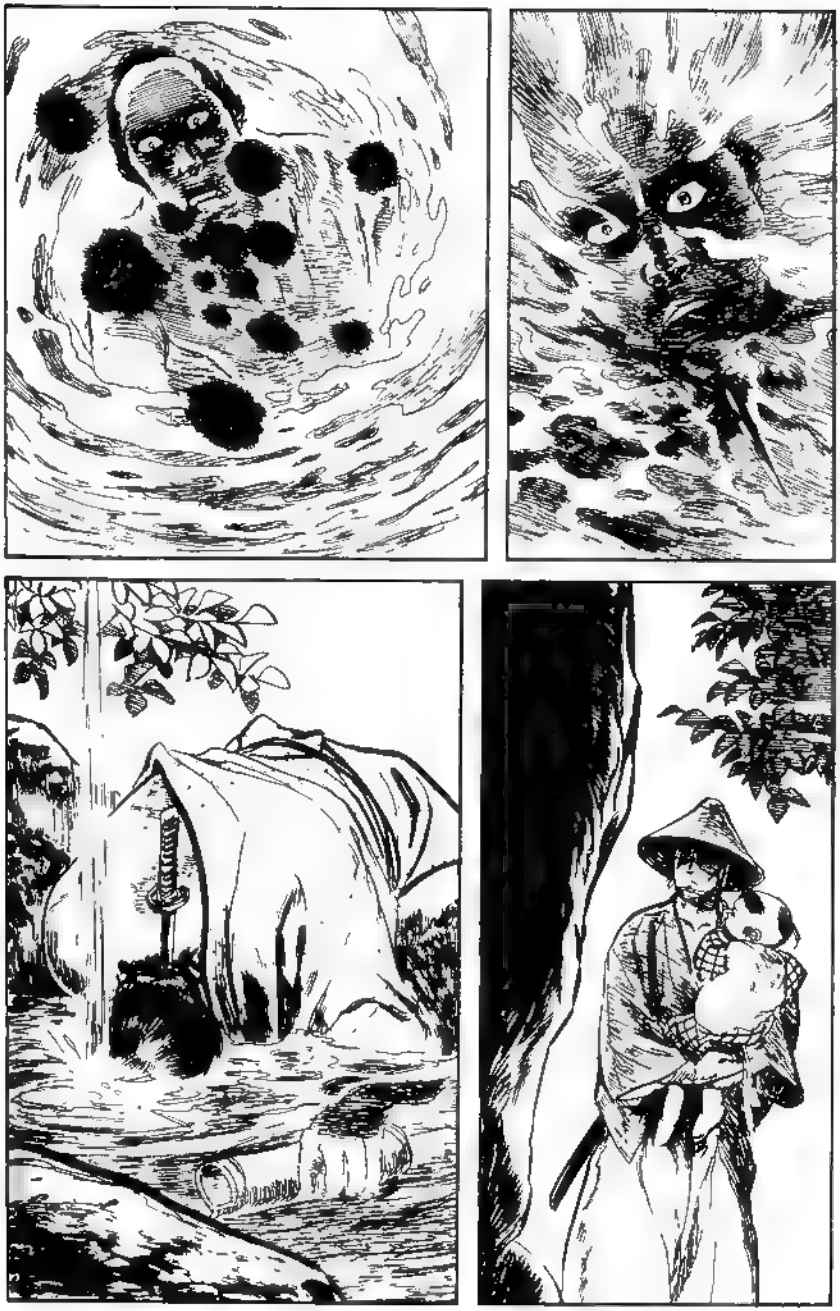
AH...?!
SEE? THIS PART'S A WHISTLE.
PHWEET!

♪ PIPEE!! ♫
TWANGG

FWOO
WHAT OF THE CORPSE. ?
IF YOU REPORT IT, THERE WILL BE SO MANY QUESTIONS.

GARA
GARA

THAT'S OKAY KID LET ME GET THAT FOR YOU!
UHK!

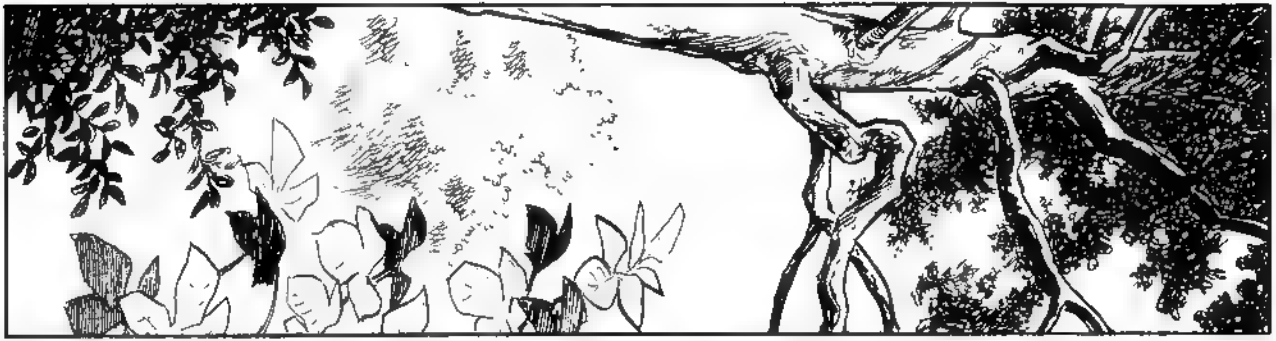


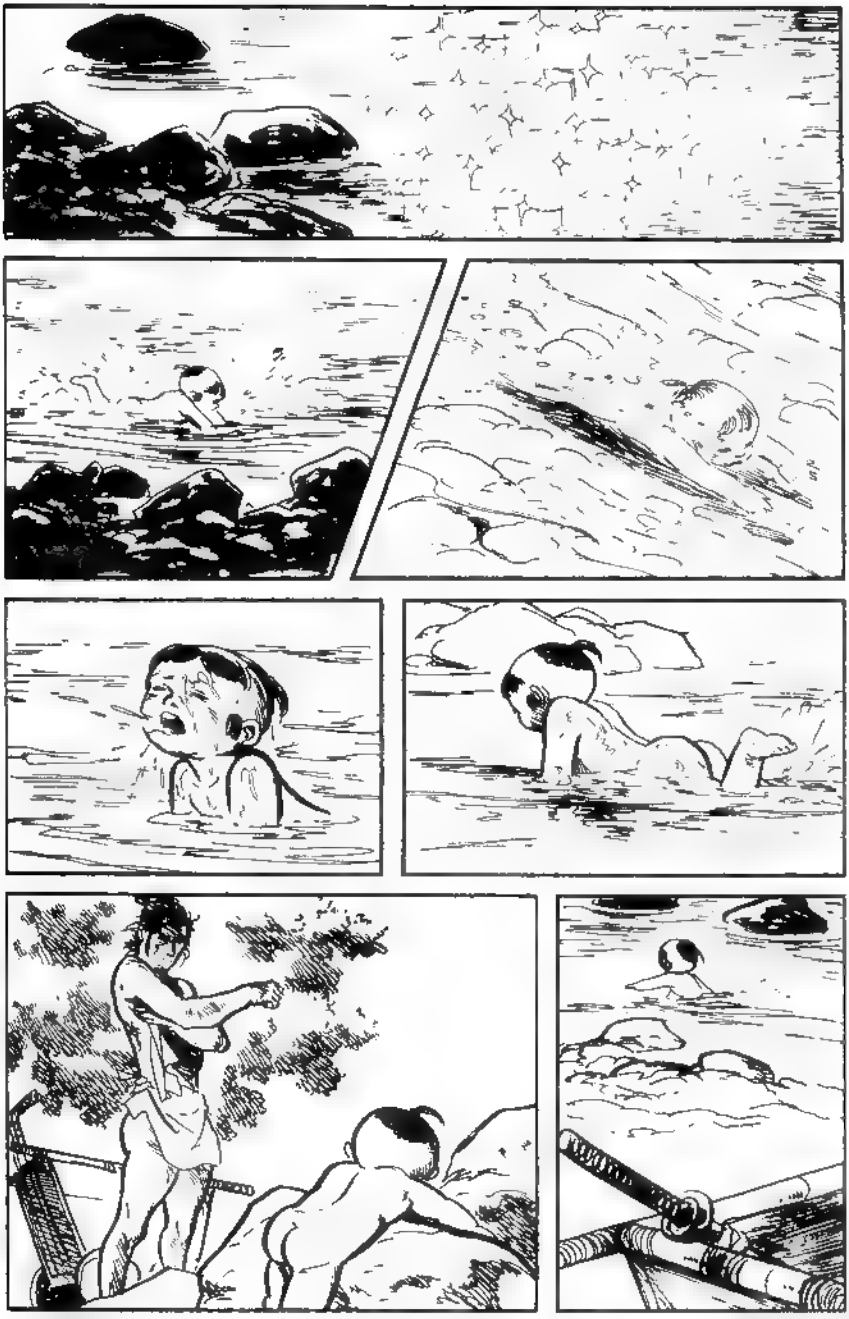
THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE YAGYŪ GRASS. JOY ANGER, SORROW PLEASURE. FEAR.
THE FIVE FEELINGS, HUMAN EMOTIONS DENIED
I TAKE THEM FROM YOU, FATHER AND SON. I TAKE JOY AND SORROW ANGER AND PLEASURE. I LEAVE ONLY FEAR.
FROM ALL WHO OFFER YOU JOY AND ANGER, SORROW AND PLEASURE, I TAKE ALSO. I TAKE LIFE GOSHA-NO-JUTSU THE FIVE WHEELS
YOU. FATHER AND SON. YOU SHALL WANT FOR SHELTER. WANT FOR FOOD. NOT EVEN WATER WILL COME TO YOU.
IN TIME, YOU WILL BE PURSUED BY ALL. CURSED BY ALL. THERE SHALL BE NO PLACE FOR YOU.

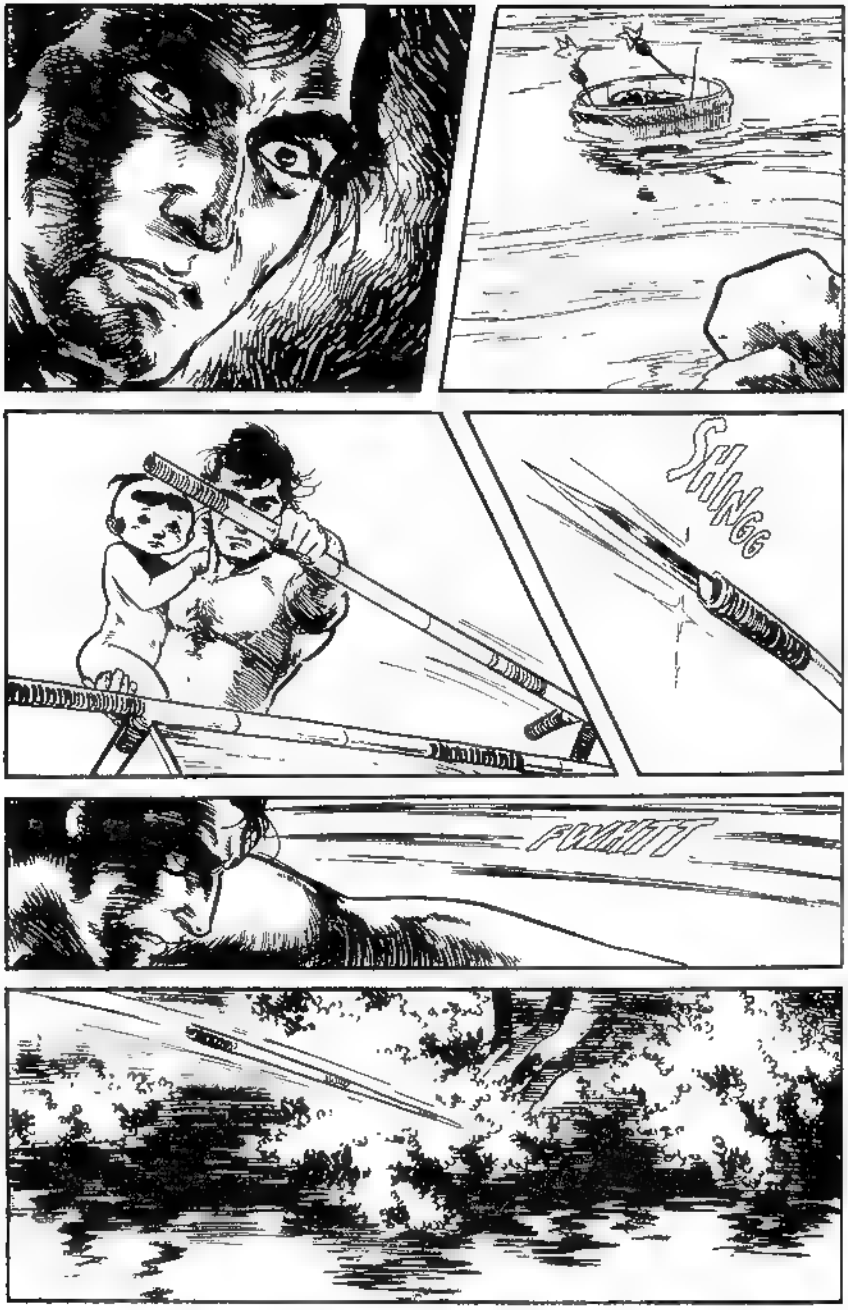
THERE IS ONLY ONE ESCAPE FROM THE FIVE WHEELS
GIVE ME THE YAGYŪ LETTER
HRNG!
WHAT SAY YOU, ŌGAMI ITTŌ?
AH, THE SORROW

TOK
TOK
TOKKA
TOK
ODEDERA DENDEN! ODEDERA DENDEN! STRETCH IT, SQUEEZE IT, MELTS IN YOUR MOUTH! MIZUAME CANDY! DEN!
ADD IT TO WATER, DRINK IT DOWN! ODEDERA DEN!

TOK TOKKA TOK
WATER CANDY, WHAT DO WE SAY?! ODEDERA DEN!
COME ONE, COME ALL! YUMMY YUM YUM!
TOK TOKKA TOK
AH, GOOD SIR! MIZUAME FOR THE BOY?!
?!
TOK TOKKA TOK






SHINGG
FWHITT

WHOOSH

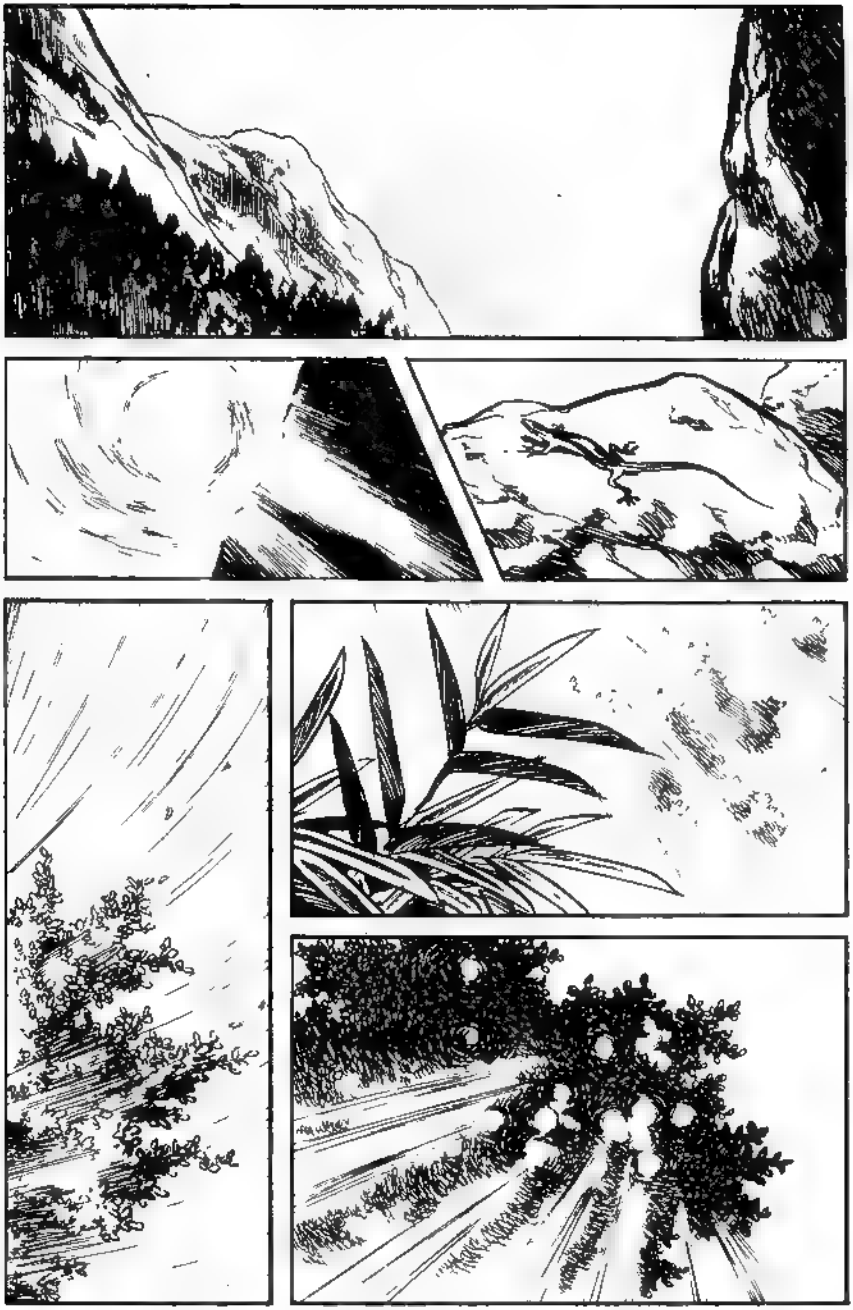
SO MANY LITTLE CHILDREN WITH THE CANDY MAN.
SO SAD I COULDN'T KILL HIM WITHOUT HURTING THEM. ALL SHALL END THE SAME. .

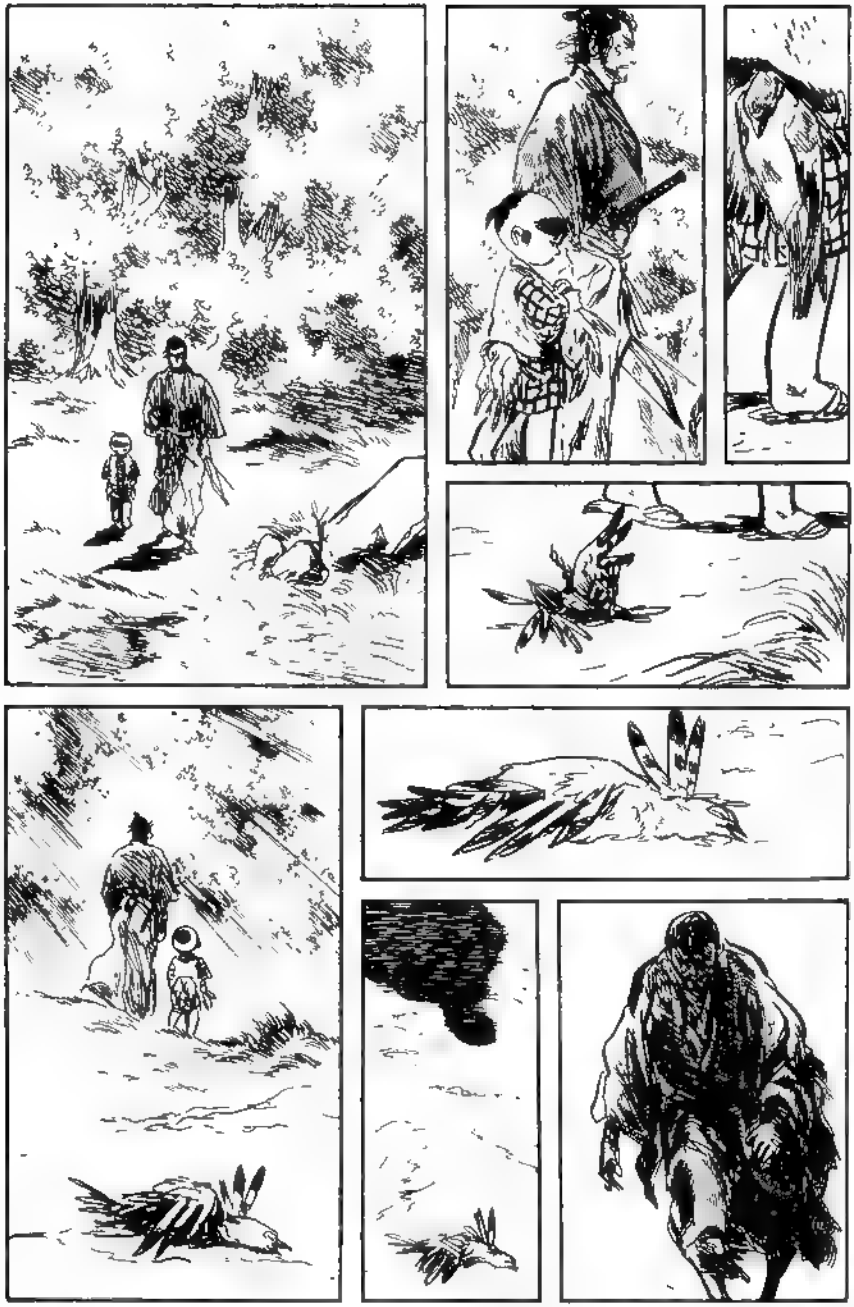
ALL WHO REACH OUT TO YOU, FATHER AND SON. ALL SHALL DIE.
THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE YAGYŪ GRASS.
KILL ALL WHO SHARE JOY AND ANGER, SHARE SORROW AND PLEASURE WITH YOUR ENEMY. TAKE AWAY THE FIVE FEELINGS, THE FIVE EMOTIONS. LEAVE ONLY TERROR. THE TERROR OF MADNESS.
THE WHEEL OF INSANITY.
ŌGAMI ITTŌ! IF YOU WOULD ESCAPE THE FIVE WHEELS, GIVE ME THE YAGYŪ LETTER!

FWIT
SPIN

MNN...
AS LONG AS YOU STAY HERE, MY SKILLS FAIL. WELL DONE, ŌGAMI ITTŌ.
MNN.

SO C-COLD SO HUNGRY
MMM...





FOOT
SPKK

WHSSH
MAN!
....
....

YOU. ?

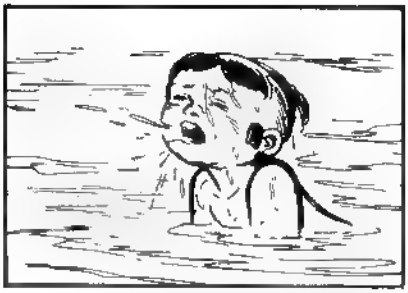
IF I HUNTED BIRDS, YOU'D HEAR MY ARROWS. IF I ATE, YOU'D SMELL THE BLOOD.

SPEARING FISH. YOU'D HEAR THE SPLASH. WHATEVER I DID, YOU WOULD FOLLOW MY TRAIL. AND I WOULD BECOME THE HUNTED
THE FIVE WHEELS WOULD BE UNDONE.

YOU WIN, ŌGAMI ITTŌ
THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE YAGYŪ GRASS ARE DEFEATED.
I AM A MAN WHO CAN SHOW NEITHER JOY NOR ANGER, SORROW NOR PLEASURE. NOT EVEN FEAR.
I WAS TRAINED THIS WAY FROM CHILDHOOD. AH. HOW IT HURTS.. AH. THE PAIN.
SO DO NOT MARVEL AT MY FACE. IT IT TRULY HURTS
I I AM IN PAIN. BELIEVE ME...
PLEASE HELP ME. THE RIVER BANK. PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE RIVER.
I WANT TO SEE MY FACE REFLECTED IN WATER. AS I DIE.
WHEN YOU CAN SHOW NO EMOTIONS, YOU HAVE ONLY WORDS..
CAN'T I SOMEHOW. AS I DIE. AT LEAST AS I DIE.

W- WAIT
IF YOU PULL
OUT THE SWORD
BLOOD WILL FLOW
DEATH RUSH IN .
JUST CARRY ME..
LIKE THIS.

I KNEW IT MY FACE. NO CHANGE.
THOUGH I HURT SO MUCH. SUCH AGONY.
AH. THE SORROW.
SPSH
THE FIVE WHEELS OF THE YAGYŪ.
FIVE WHEELS OF SORROW.



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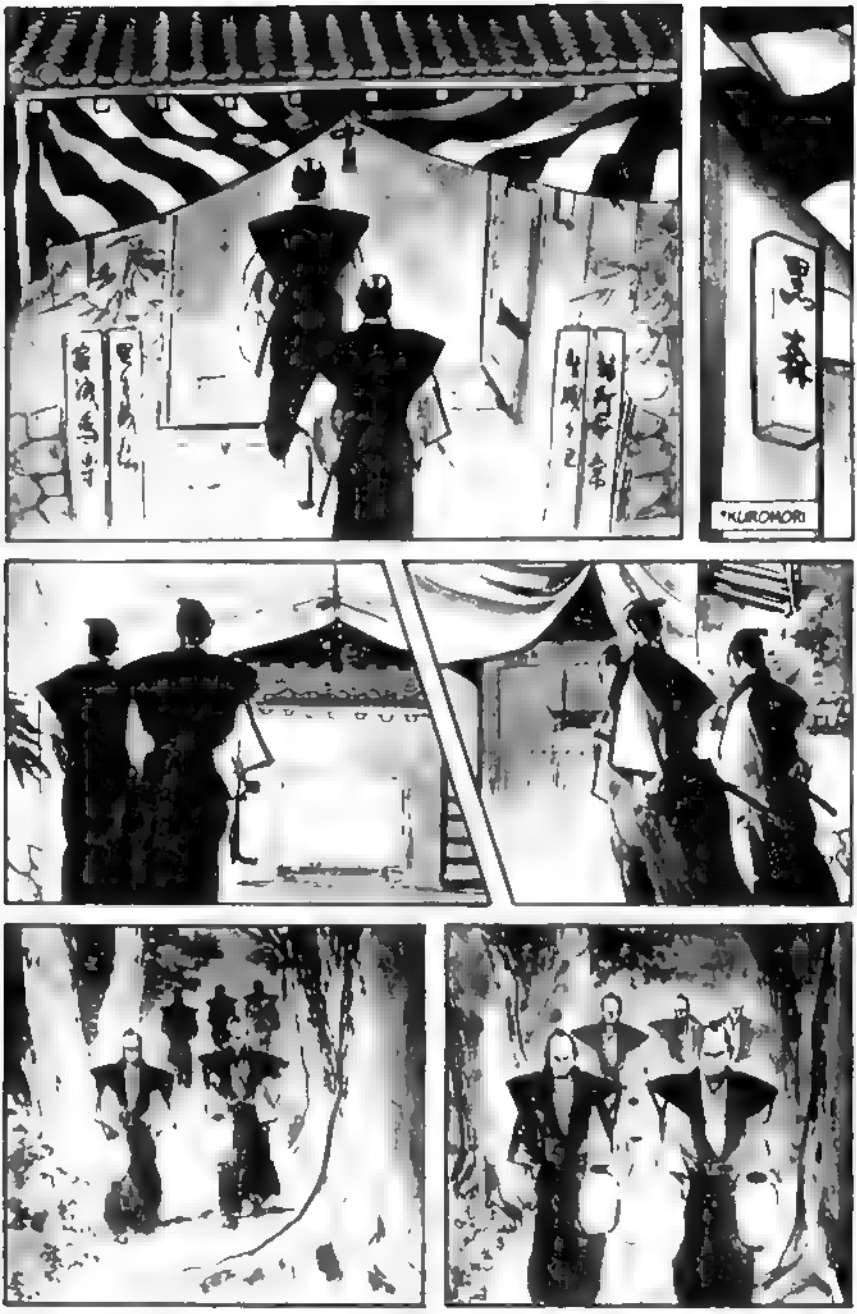
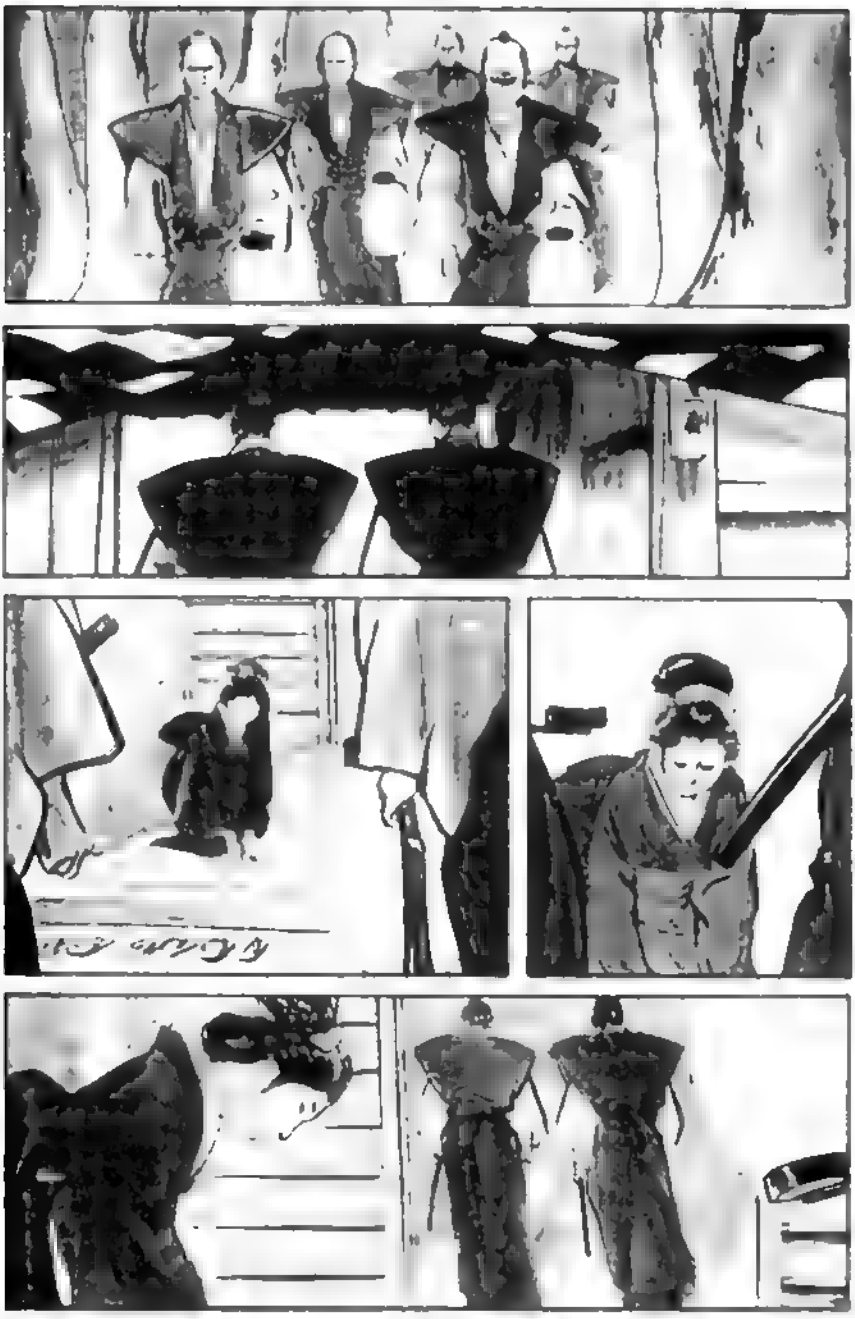
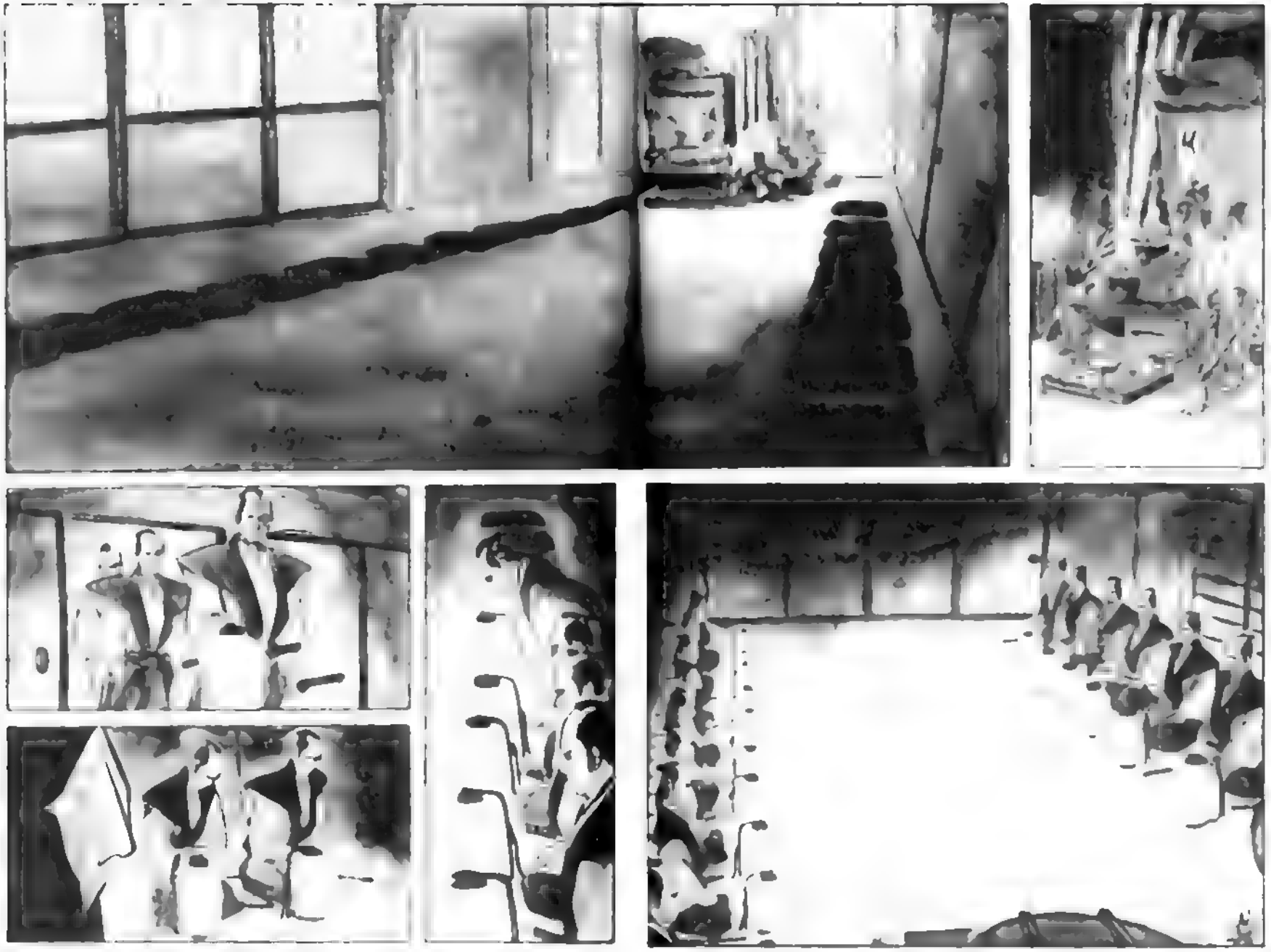
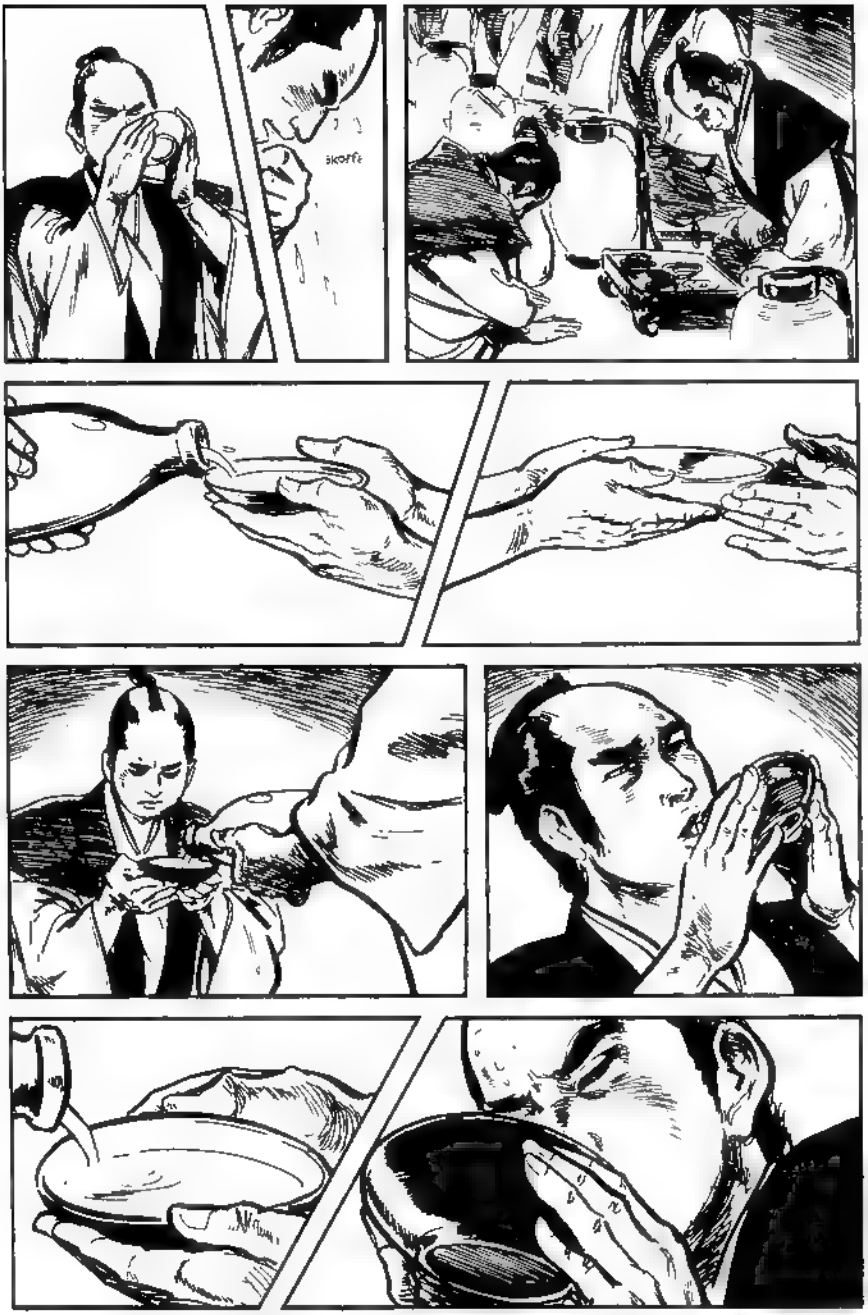
the seventy-seventh

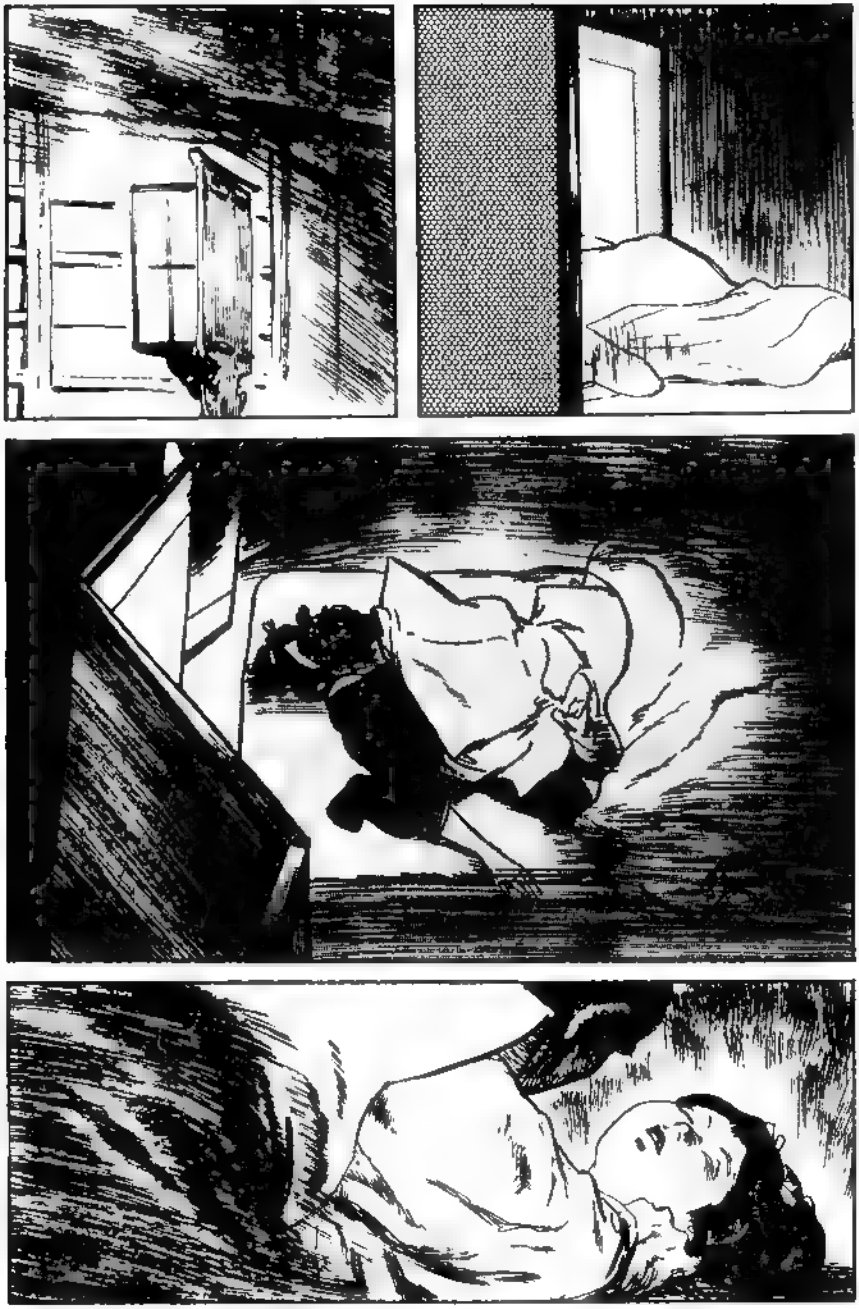
Incense for the Living

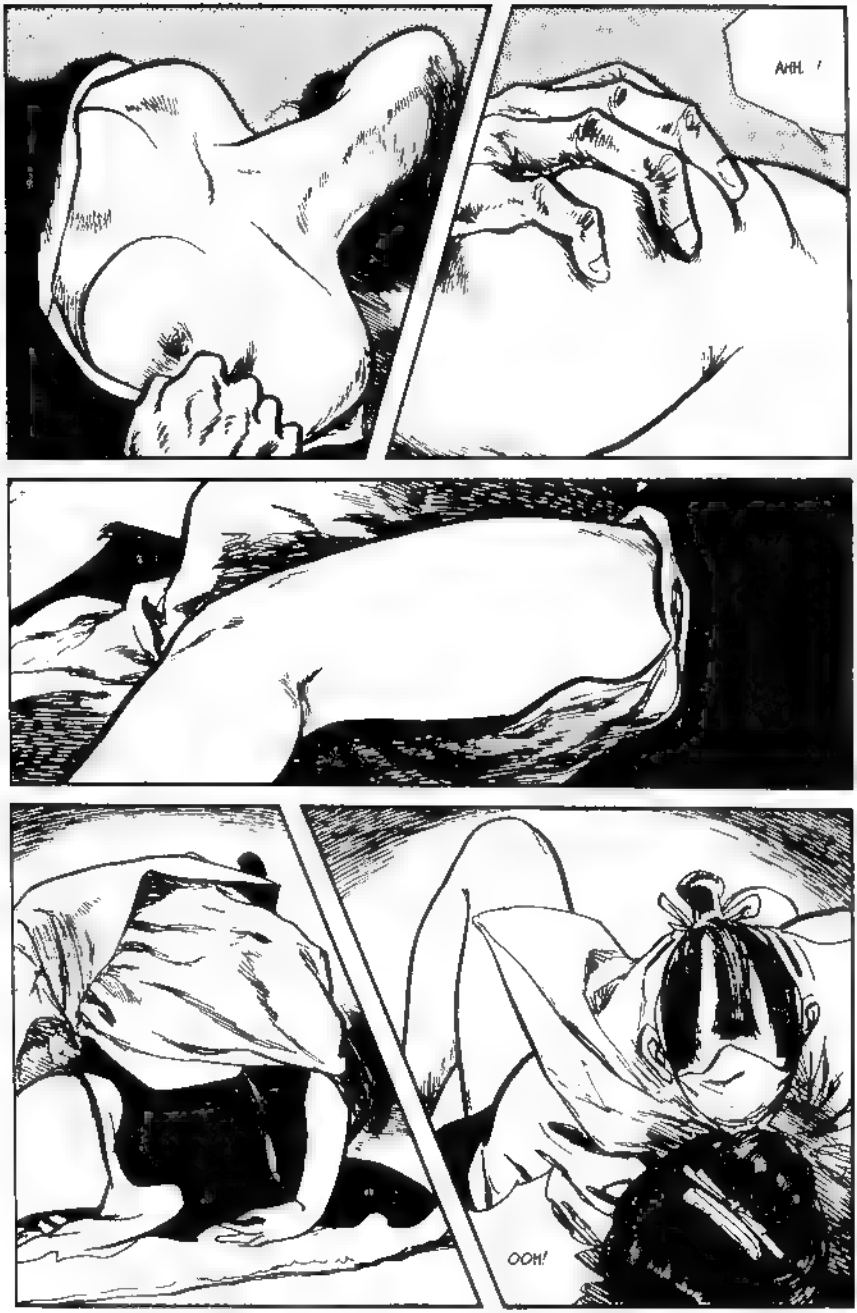

黒森
*KUROMORI



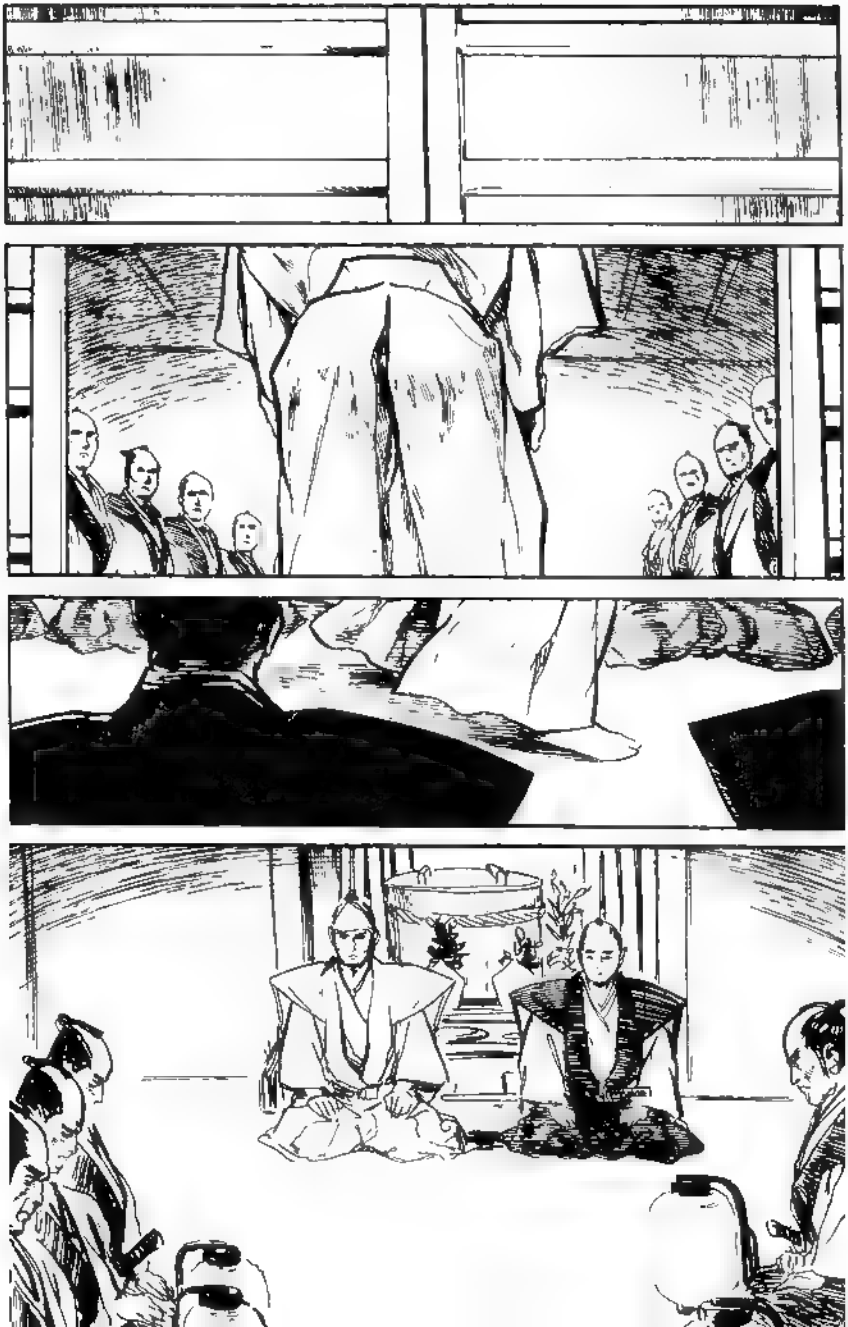



skoff!




AHH!
OOH!

MM. DARLING. !
AH!
AHHN!!



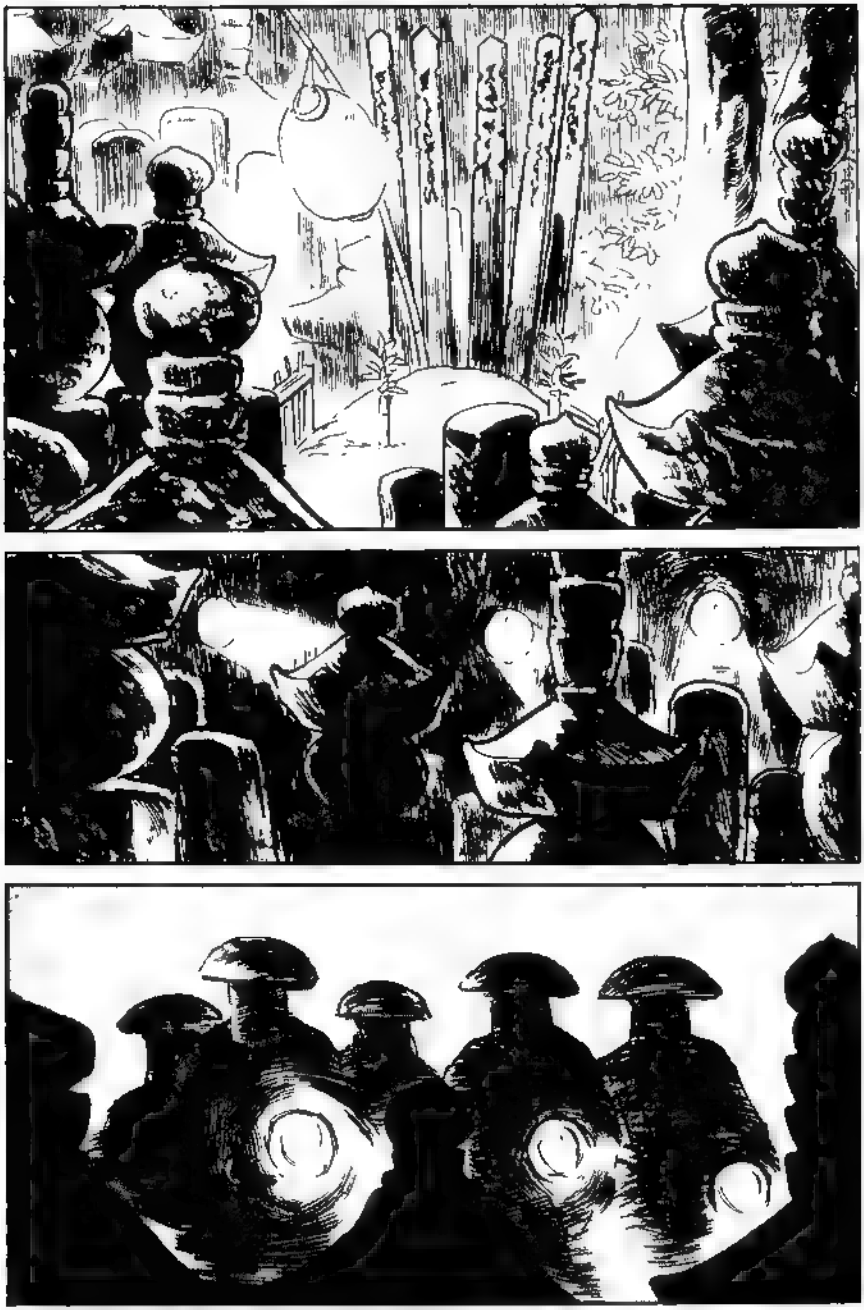
IT IS TIME TO PART
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS DURING MY LIFE, AND ASK YOUR SUPPORT FOR ICHITARŌ, HEAD OF THE KUROMORI HOUSE, AND MY NEXT OF KIN.

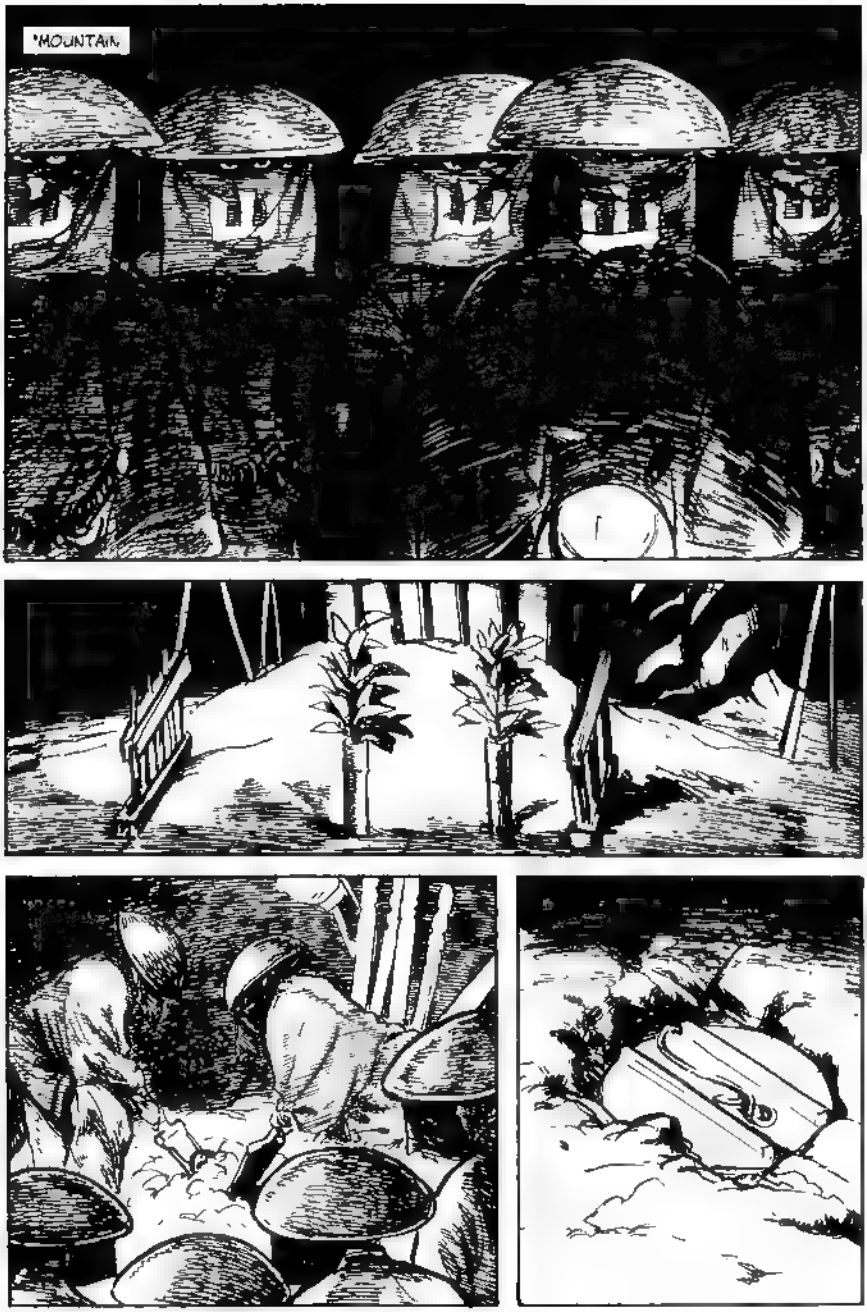
"YOU KNOW OF THE YAMA-SHŪ? ONE OF THE SHŌGUN'S SPECIAL DETACHMENTS?
"THESE YAMA-SHŪ HAVE A PECULIAR CUSTOM—LIVING INCENSE.

*AT FORTY-TWO, A YAMA-SHO GIVES HIS OFFICIAL STIPEND TO HIS HEIR
*. AND LEAVING NO REGRETS.
*. HAS A LIVING FUNERAL.
*INCENSE IS BURNED, AND HE'S BORNE TO THE GRAVEYARD

"EVEN AMONG THE YAMA-SHU THEY'RE HAND-PICKED WARRIORS
"MEN OF SOUND BODY, SUPERB SWORDWORK."

SHKK!
KKKK




'MOUNTAIN.

COME FORTH!
GHOST OF KUROMORI ICHINOSHIA! I NAME YOU O-YAMA-METSUKE
SIR!

"LAYING INCENSE" IS THEIR INDUCTION CEREMONY
"THUS SOME CALL THEM SHIBITO-MITSUKE GHOST INSPECTORS
"NAMELESS NEVER TO SEE HIS FAMILY AGAIN.
"FATED TO END HIS LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF JAPAN. THAT'S YOUR YAMA-MITSUKE

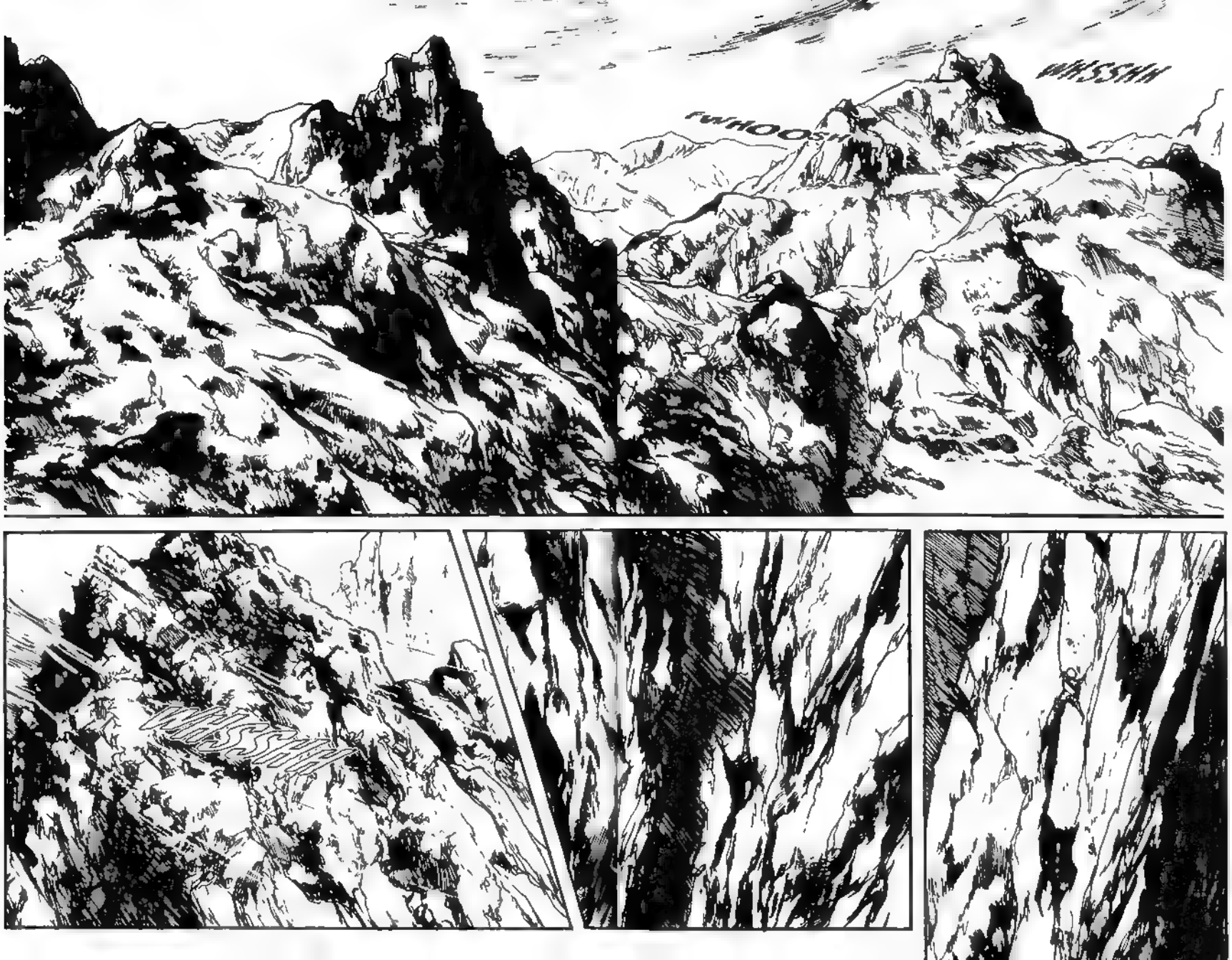
"A DEADLY, TERRIFYING BAND
"ALREADY DEAD THEY HAVE NO REGRET, NO SORROW NO DESIRE.
"SKILLED FIGHTERS ALL
"LAST RITES COMPLETE, THEY'RE READY FOR DEATH ON A NAMELESS MOUNTAINSIDE.
"THEY KNOW NO FEAR A BAND OF SPIRITS OF THE DEAD."

AND THEY'VE SET THEIR EYES ON IYAMA HAN.

THE YAMA-METSUKE STRIKE DEEP INTO THE MOUNTAINS SEARCHING OUT HIDDEN GOLD AND SILVER MINES

AND ACTUALLY, WE HAVE ONE.
shrife
IT'S BEEN IN THE CLAN FOR GENERATIONS. IT'S VERY SMALL.
YET IF THEY FIND IT, OUR HAN WILL BE DISSOLVED
OUR HUNTERS SAY THEY'VE GLIMPSED THE YAMA-METSUKE ON OUR TERRITORY TIME IS PRECIOUS
WE NEED TO BORROW YOUR STRENGTH. NO YAMA-METSUKE MUST LEAVE YAMA ALIVE.
I BEG YOU!
WE'LL SEAL THE MINE ONCE YOU'RE DONE.

MY FEE, FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ!
TH-THANK YOU!
THERE IS YOUR PAYMENT
THE SHŌGUN'S YAMA-METSUKE ..?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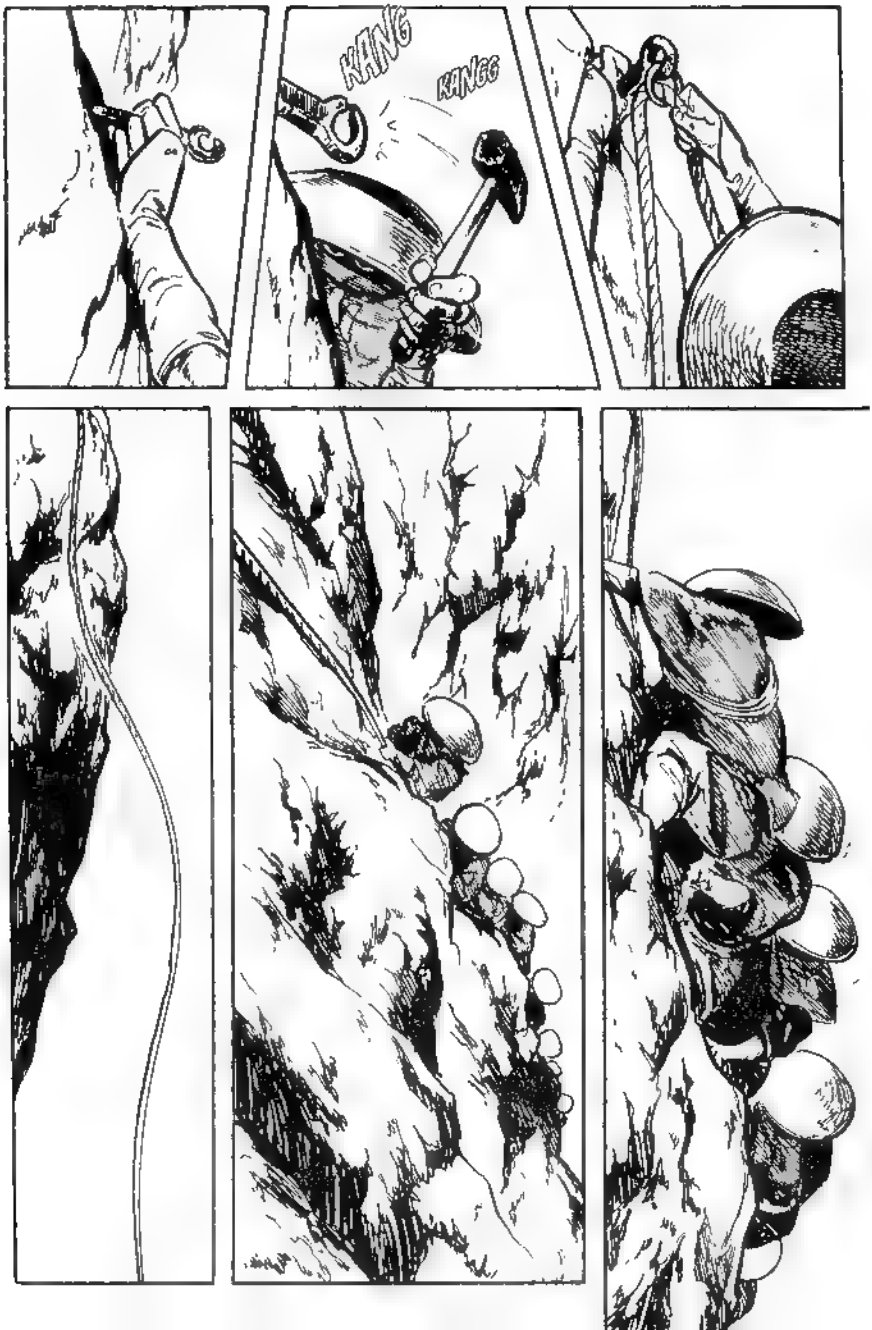
WHOOSH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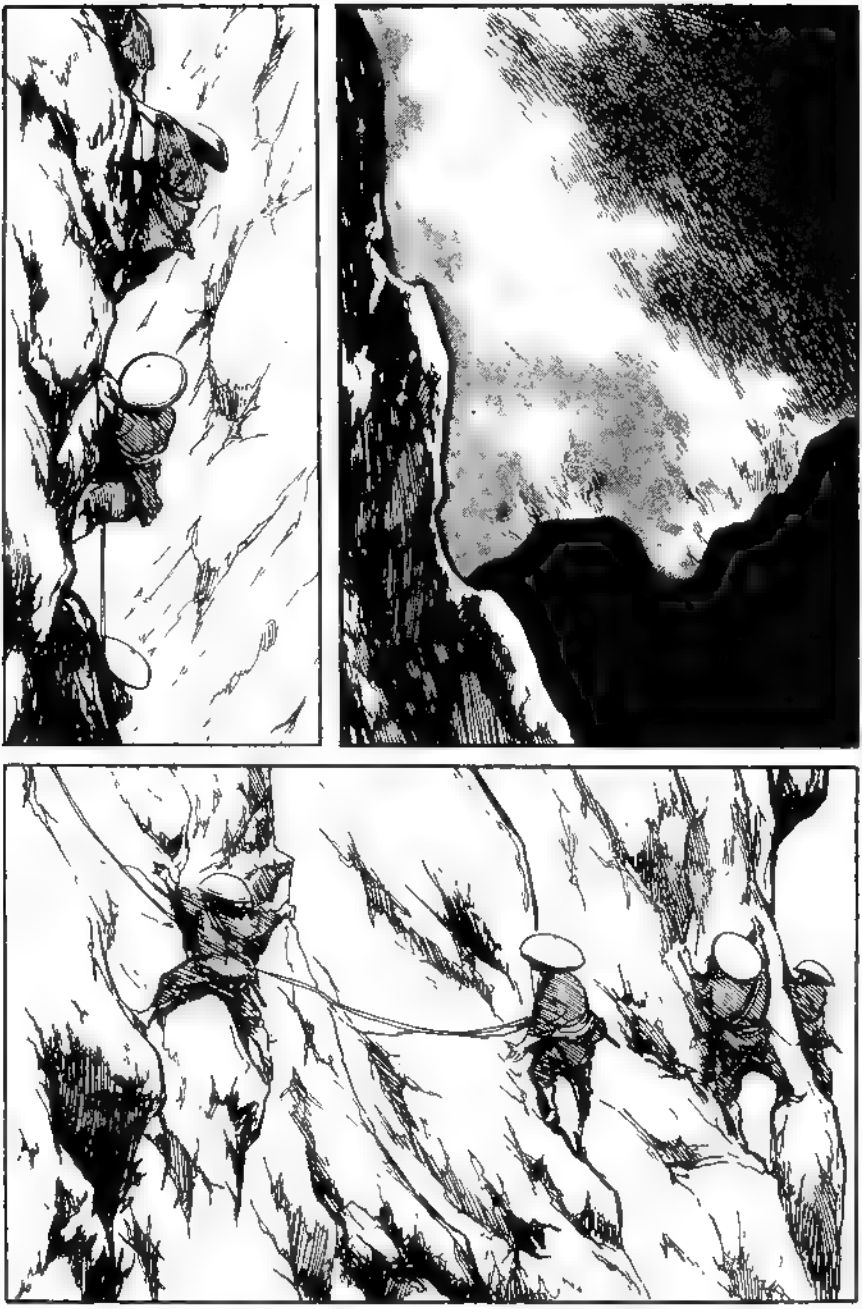
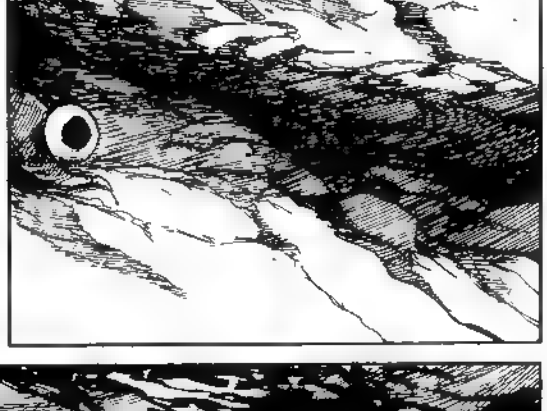
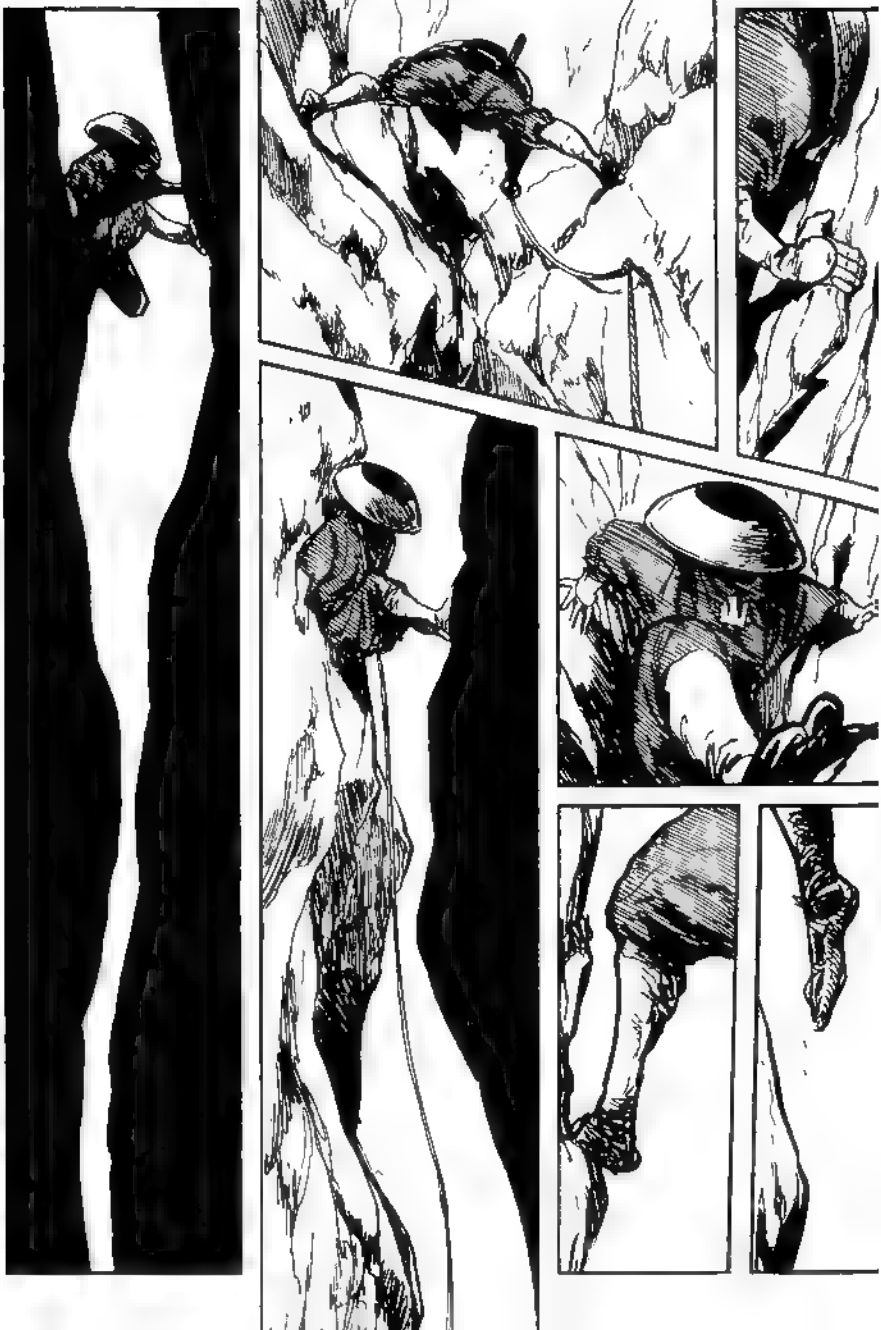






IT'S TIME WE HEARD FROM THE IIYAMA GRASS.
THE SIGNAL, SIR!
OVER THERE!

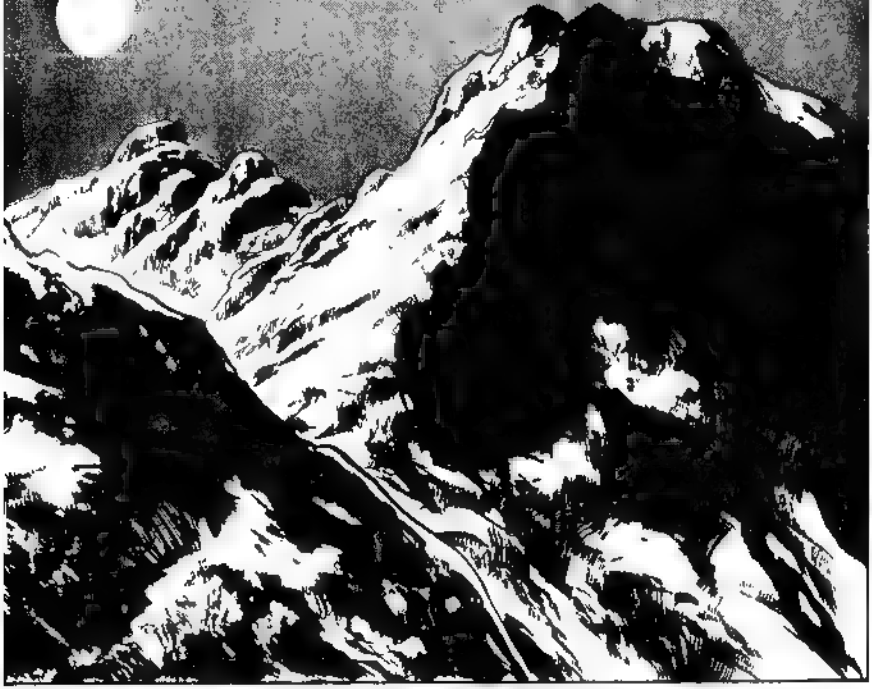
WHAT ?!
THEY'RE SENDING AN ASSASSIN AGAINST US!
LONE WOLF ŌGAMI ITTŌ
NO!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ HIMSELF?!
NOT SURPRISING. IF WE FIND THEIR MINE IIYAMA HAN IS FINISHED.
OF COURSE THEY'D HIRE AN ASSASSIN TO STOP US.
INTERESTING! THE FORMER EXECUTIONER A WORTHY RIVAL!
AND WE YAMA-METSUKE HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE
IT'S TIME TO AVENGE KUCHIKI JŌNAI! *
NOT EVEN THE YAGYŪ COULD TAKE HIM. WE CAN SHOW OUR SKILLS AT LAST!

*SEE LWOC #3

SILENCE!
OUR DUTY IS TO FIND IIYAMA'S HIDDEN MINE, AND BRING BACK EVIDENCE FOR DISSOLVING THE HAN!
THAT MINE WILL HELP SAVE THE SHŌGUNATE'S FINANCES
THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE ON THIS ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
BUT EVEN IF WE DON'T SEEK HIM OUT, HE'LL PURSUE US.
FOOL!
HOW WILL LONE WOLF AND CUB, THIS ITTŌ, SCALE THE HEIGHTS?!
WE WALK THE RIDGES! THE SEA OF CLOUDS OUR HOME!
NOT EVEN ITTO CAN FLY! HE'D NEED YEARS OF TRAINING TO FOLLOW US.

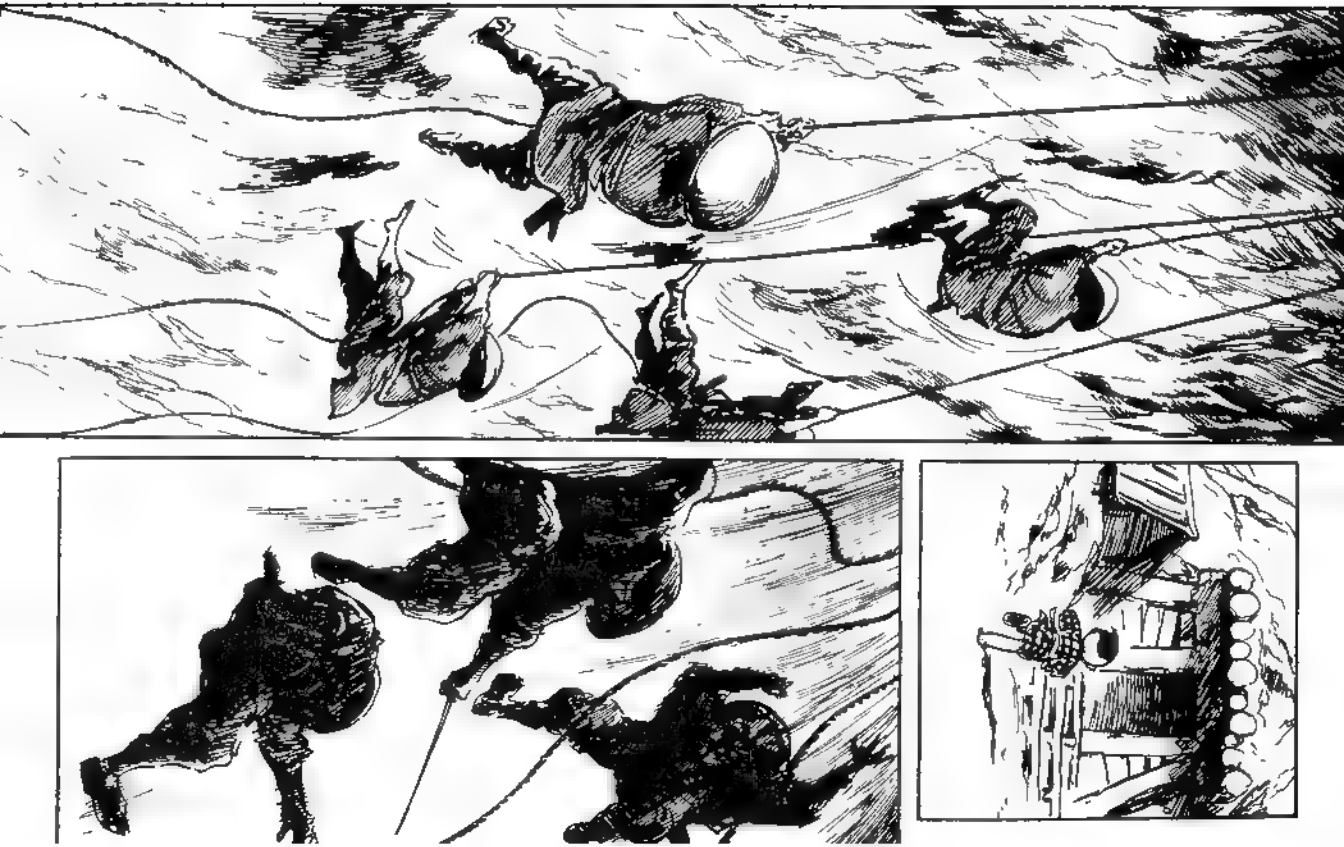
YAMA-METSUKE ARE LIKE THE BIRDS!
SET UP GUARD STATIONS, MAKE WALLS OF THE CLIFFS AND CRAGS, WE SURMOUNT THEM! THE WHOLE NATION IS OPEN TO US
NO ROAD CLOSED!
THE SHŌGUN HIMSELF MADE US YAMA-METSUKE- FORGET IT NOT!
YET, YET IT'S A PERFECT CHANCE FOR VENGEANCE..
WE'RE BIRDS! THE FIVE DESIRES, THE FIVE FEELINGS. FORGOTTEN. OUR INCENSE BURNED, WE'RE FREE OF THE WORLD.
THE HATREDS OF MEN MEAN NOTHING NOW
.....
.....

NOW- FORGET ŌGAMI ITTŌ
IF HE CATCHES US, WE DEAL WITH HIM. BUT HOW CAN A MERE MORTAL CLIMB THESE PEAKS?
HE HAS ONE CHOICE ONLY WAIT FOR US IN THE MINE
THE GRASS SAY THE MINE IS BELOW THIS RIDGE, OPPOSITE SHIGIZAWA VALLEY ON THE FLANKS OF MOUNT IIYAMA.
HMM. IN CASE ITTŌ IS HIDING THERE, WE'LL DIVIDE OUR FORCES.
EIZAN, YOU WAIT ON A ROCK FACE WHERE ITTŌ CAN'T REACH YOU, AND TAKE THE GOLD. THEN SWING ACROSS THE RAVINE SO HE CAN'T FOLLOW. AS LONG AS WE GET THOSE GOLD NUGGETS TO EDO, WE ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION.
UNDER-STOOD?!
YES, SIR!



OUR PERIMETER IS SEALED THE YAMA-METSUKE CAN'T LIFT A FINGER
AND WITH THOSE SHEER CLIFFS BEHIND US, NO ONE GETS THROUGH.

NOT EVEN THE BIRDS..



AHH!
NNG!
HRK!
WHAT TH-?!
OH, NO!
WHOOD
SKCCH
SPLTT
HRNGK!
AHH!!

RANG!

LONE WOLF AND CUB! YOU WERE WAITING!

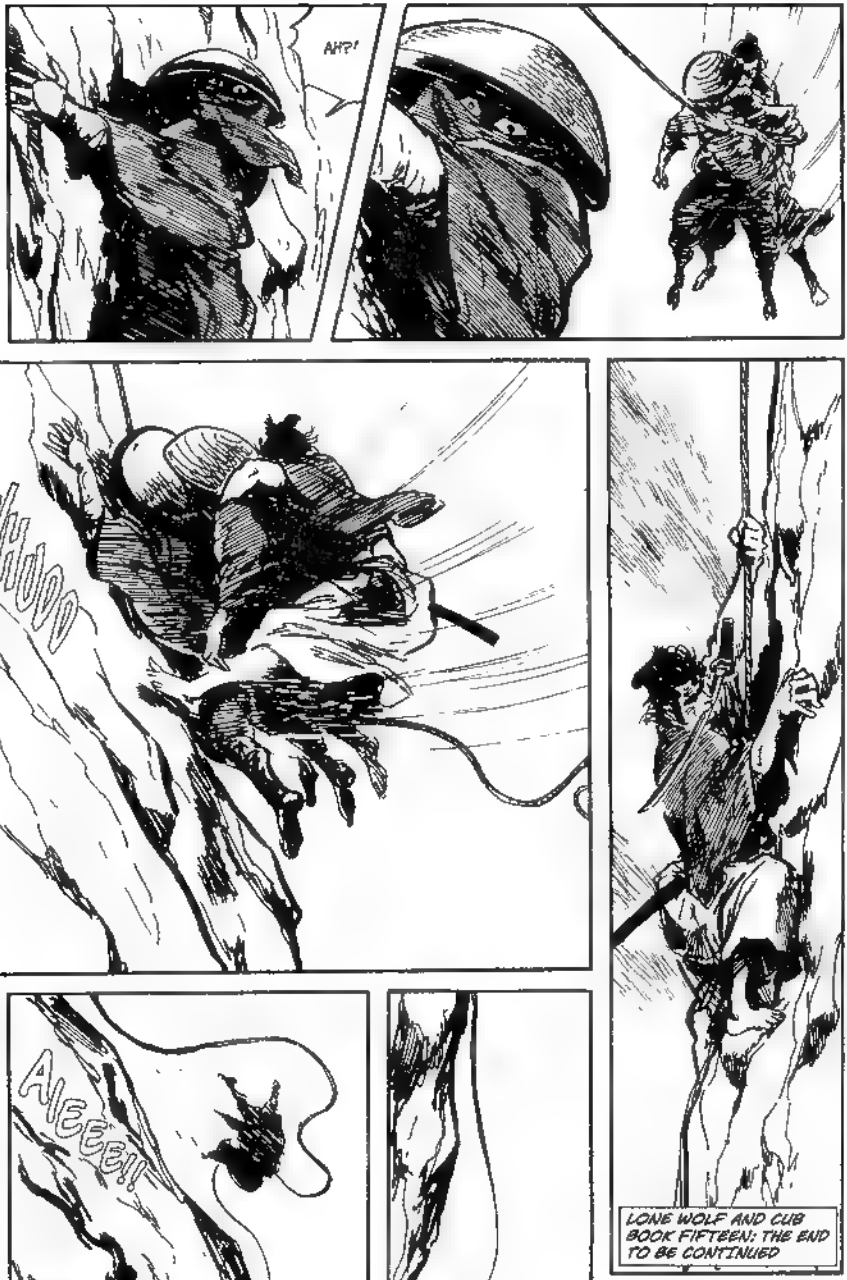
DONZAN! GET THE GOLD! I'LL TAKE ITTŌ!
SIR!
RYAHHH!
SHING

WHSSSSST
HGYAH!
NGK!
GCHOK
CHOK

SHRRK
NGN ..?!
DAIGORO! STAY HERE!

SKOSSH

WHSSH
CHCK
FWHD
RYAAAHHH!


AH?!
WHOOO
AIEEE!!
LONE WOLF AND CUB
BOOK FIFTEEN: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class

bushidō
The way of the warrior. Also shortened to *shidō*

dōtanuki
A battle sword. Literally, "sword that cuts through torsos."

Edo
The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo

gozumezu
The horse-and ox headed demons of *meifumado*

han
A feudal domain

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*

chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic, used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

juzu
A Buddhist rosary.

kagemusha
A double

Kannon
Buddhist goddess of mercy

karo
Elder, senior advisor to the *daimyo* of a *han*

kōgi kaishakunin
The shōgun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation

ningi
The spycraft and combat arts of the ninja. Also called *ninjutsu*

Noh
Traditional Japanese dance drama in which the performers wear carved masks.

nukenin
A ninja who has broken the code of the *shinobi* and fled the ninja world

ō-metsuke
Chief inspector. The supreme law-enforcement officer of the shōgunate

ri
Old unit of measurement Approximately 4 kilometers (2.5 miles)

rōnin
A masterless samurai Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

ryō
A gold piece, worth 60 *monme*.

shinobi
A generic term for ninja, meaning "one who moves in secrecy." Ninja had their heyday in the time of warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous *shinobi* were the ninja of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The Kurokuwa that appear in *Lone Wolf and Cub* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

wajo
A term of respect for a high priest or the head of a temple

yama-metsuke
Mountain inspectors Special unit used to infiltrate and spy in mountain regions

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs, founded a golf magazine; produced movies, written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays, and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear. "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills

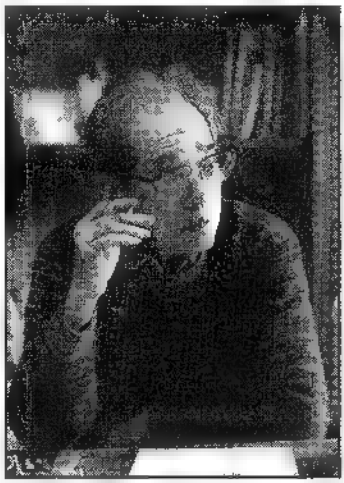
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*) Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



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